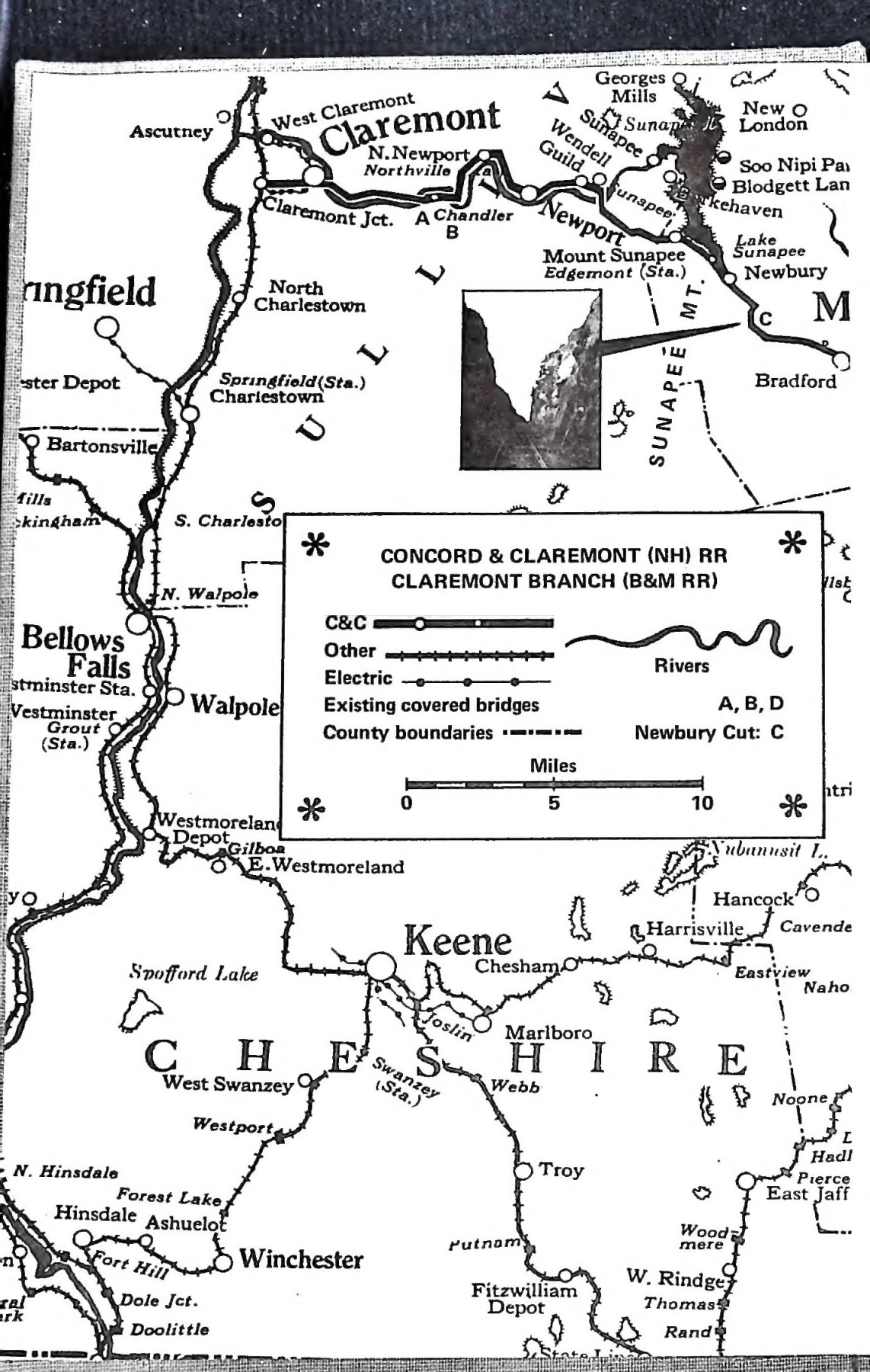
# THROUGH COVERED BRIDGES TO CONCORD

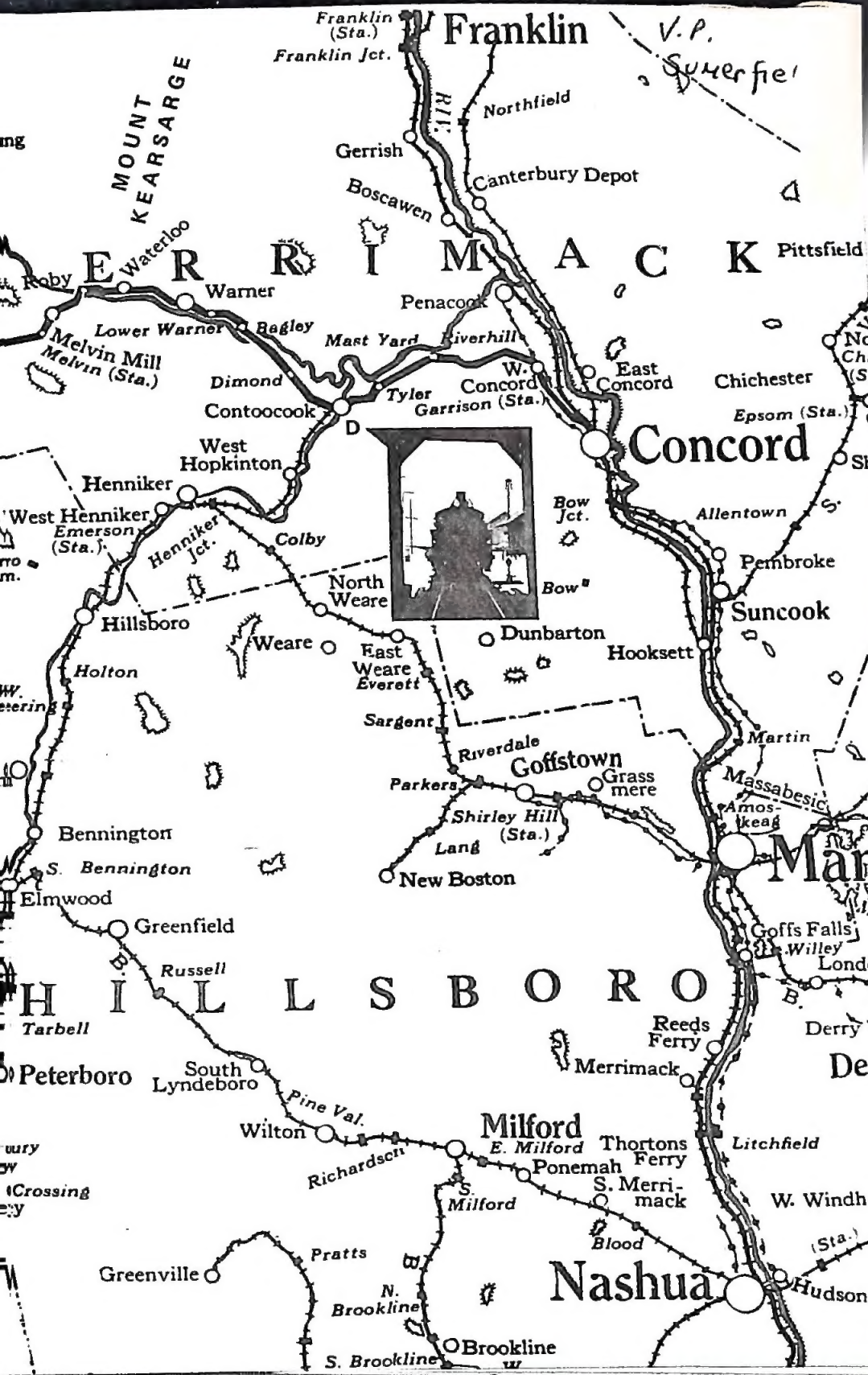



A Recollection of
the Concord &
Claremont RR (NH)

by EDGAR T. MEAD, Jr.

SHORTLINE RA SERIES


Georges Mills
New London
Ascutney
West Claremont
Claremont
N. Newport
Northville
Sunapee
Wendell
Guild
Soo Nipi Pa
Blodgett Lan
Claremont Jct.
A Chandler
B
Newport
Lake Sunapee
Mount Sunapee
Edgemont (Sta.)
Newbury
North Charlestown
SUNAPEE MT.
Bradford
Springfield (Sta.)
Charlestown
Bartonsville
S. Charlesto
N. Walpole
Bellows Falls
Walpole
Westminster Sta.
Westminster
Grout (Sta.)
CONCORD & CLAREMONT (NH) RR
CLAREMONT BRANCH (B&M RR)
C&C
Other
Electric
Existing covered bridges
County boundaries
Rivers
A, B, D
Newbury Cut: C
Miles
0
5
10
Westmoreland Depot
Gilboa
E. Westmoreland
Hancock
Harrisville
Keene
Chesham
Spofford Lake
Eastview
Joslin
Marlboro
CHESHIRE
West Swanzey
Swanzey (Sta.)
Webb
Noone
Westport
Troy
N. Hinsdale
Forest Lake
Hinsdale
Ashuelot
Winchester
Fort Hill
Dole Jct.
Doolittle
Putnam
Fitzwilliam Depot
W. Rindge
East Jaff
Wood mere
Thomas
Rand


Franklin (Sta.)
Franklin
Franklin Jct.
V.P.
Summerfield
MOUNT KEARSARGE
Northfield
Gerrish
Canterbury Depot
Boscawen
MERRIMACK
Pittsfield
Roby
Waterloo
Warner
Penacook
Lower Warner
Bagley
Mast Yard
Riverhill
Melvin Mill
Melvin (Sta.)
Dimond
Tyler
W. Concord
East Concord
Chichester
Garrison (Sta.)
Epsom (Sta.)
Contoocook
D
Concord
West Hopkinton
Henniker
West Henniker
Emerson (Sta.)
Henniker Jct.
Colby
Bow Jct.
Allentown
Pembroke
North Weare
Bow
Suncook
Hillsboro
Weare
Dunbarton
East Weare
Everett
Hooksett
Holton
Sargent
Martin
Riverdale
Goffstown
Grass mere
Parkers
Massabesic
Amos-keag
Shirley Hill (Sta.)
Bennington
Lang
S. Bennington
New Boston
Elmwood
Greenfield
Goffs Falls
Willey
Londond
Russell
HILLSBORO
Tarbell
Reeds Ferry
Derry Villa
Peterboro
South Lyndeboro
Merrimack
Derry
Pine Val.
Wilton
Milford
E. Milford
Thortons Ferry
Litchfield
Richardson
Ponemah
S. Merri-mack
W. Windham
S. Milford
Blood
Pratts
Greenville
Nashua
Hudson
N. Brookline
Brookline
S. Brookline

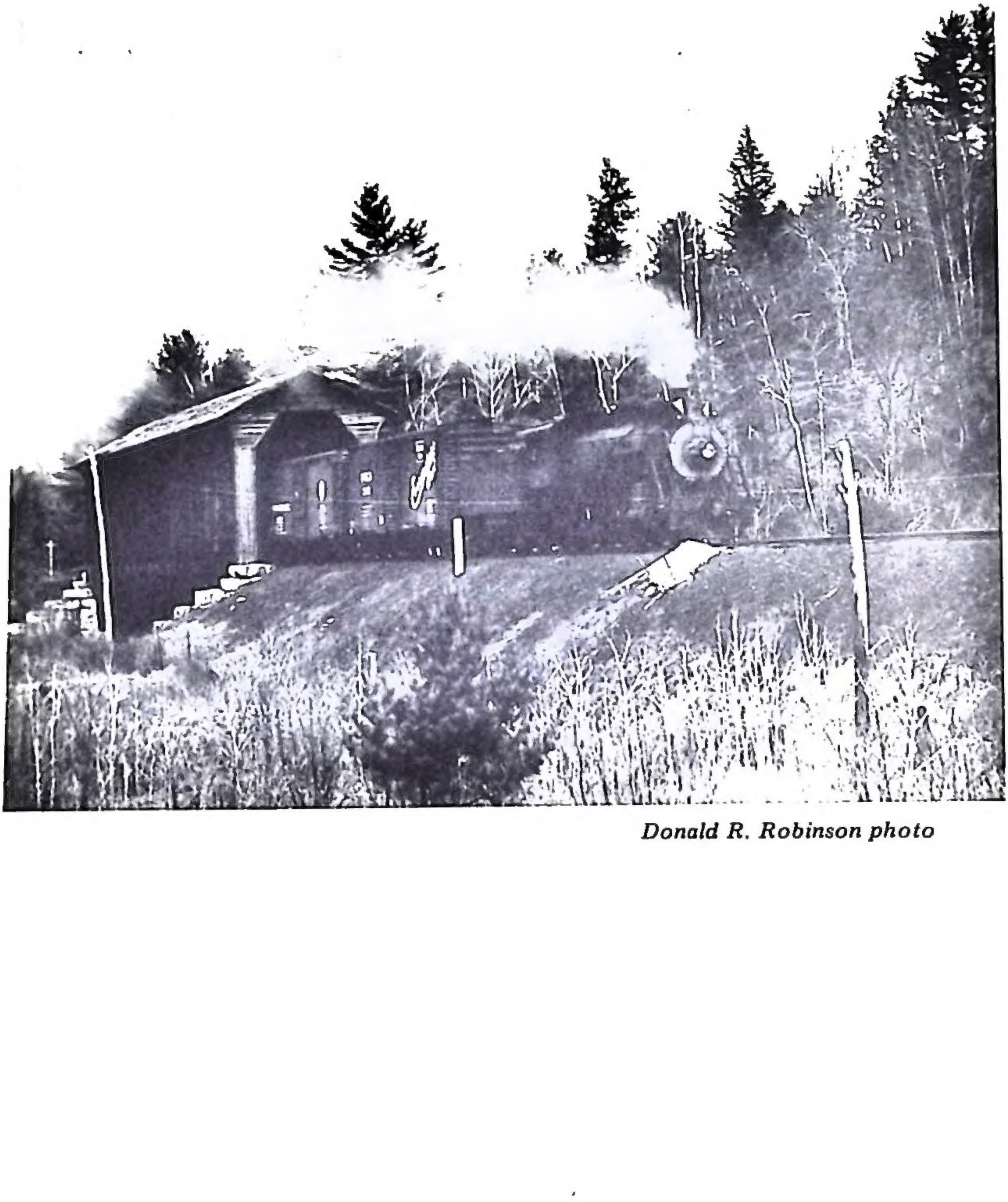
# CONCORD & CLAREMONT N. H. RAILROAD.

## PETERBORO' & HILLSBORO' RAILROAD.

| Trains West and South. Read Downward. | | | | | Trains East and North. Read Upward. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M. | A. M. | A. M. | LEAVE] | [ARRIVE | P. M. | P. M. | P. M. |
| 12 00 | 8 45 | | .Boston, B. & L.. | | 1 15 | | 10 05 |
| 12 00 | 7 30 | | Boston, B. & M. | | 1 20 | | |
| 11 15 | 7 30 | | ... Worcester ... | | 2 15 | | |
| 1 07 | 8 28 | | .... Lawrence. .. | | 12 15 | | |
| 1 00 | 9 33 | | .....Lowell .... | | 12 15 | | 9 15 |
| 1 35 | 10 00 | | ....Nashua .... | | 11 50 | | 8 40 |
| 2 20 | 10 20 | MIXED. | ...Manchester... | | 10 58 | MIXED. | 8 05 |
| 3 30 | 11 05 | 7 10 | ..... Concord ..... | | 10 15 | A8 35 | 7 30 |
| 3 40 | 11 15 | 7 35 | ..... West Concord ..... | | 9 56 | 8 20 | 7 17 |
| 3 50 | 11 27 | 7 58 | ..... Mast Yard ..... | | 9 45 | 7 55 | 7 06 |
| 4 00 | 11 30 | 8 19 | ..... Contoocook ..... | | 9 35 | 7 35 | 6 56 |
| 4 05 | | 8 25 | .. Contoocook .. | | 9 30 | | 6 48 |
| 4 13 | | 8 37 | West Hopkinton | | 9 22 | | 6 37 |
| 4 25 | | 9 10 | ... Henniker... | | 9 10 | | 6 13 |
| 4 30 | | 9 17 | .West Henniker. | | 9 05 | | 6 02 |
| 4 45 | | 9 46 | ...Hillsboro'... | | 8 50 | | 5 40 |
| 5 05 | | 10 11 | ....Antrim .... | | 8 30 | | 5 05 |
| 5 12 | | 10 22 | ...Bennington .. | | 8 23 | | 4 58 |
| 5 20 | | 10 35 | .Hancock Junc.. | | 8 15 | | 4 45 |
| 5 40 | | 11 00 | ...Peterboro'... | | 8 00 | | 4 25 |
| 4 06 | 11 45 | 8 30 | ....Dimond's Corner.... | | 9 25 | 7 11 | 6 47 |
| 4 22 | 11 58 | 9 13 | .....Warner..... | | 9 13 | 7 02 | 6 35 |
| 4 27 | 12 03 | 9 24 | ..... Waterloo ..... | | 9 04 | 6 47 | 6 25 |
| 4 33 | 12 10 | 9 37 | ..... Roby's Corner..... | | 8 59 | 6 36 | 6 20 |
| 4 38 | 12 15 | 9 47 | .....Melvin's Mills ..... | | 8 54 | 6 24 | 6 14 |
| 4 44 | 12 23 | 10 05 | .....Bradford..... | | 8 48 | 6 12 | 6 07 |
| 4 59 | 12 39 | 10 30 | .Newbury (Sunapee Lake. | | 8 32 | 5 24 | 5 47 |
| 5 14 | 12 54 | 10 49 | .....Mt. Sunapee..... | | 8 26 | 5 09 | 5 39 |
| 5 25 | 1 05 | 11 06 | ..... Sunapee ..... | | 8 16 | 4 32 | 5 25 |
| 5 36 | 1 16 | 11 45 | ..... Newport ..... | | 8 07 | 4 15 | 5 11 |
| 5 43 | 1 23 | 11 54 | .....Northville ..... | | 7 59 | 3 47 | 5 01 |
| 5 50 | 1 30 | 12 04 | .....Kellyville ..... | | 7 54 | 3 37 | 4 55 |
| 6 09 | 1 49 | 12 35 | .....Claremont ..... | | 7 40 | 3 15 | 4 40 |
| 6 15 | 1 55 | 12 43 | ....Claremont Junc..... | | 7 30 | 3 00 | 4 30 |
| 8 15 | [illegible] | 65 | ... Windsor ... | | | 2 27 | |
| 8 50 | [illegible] | 40 | ...White River Jc. | | | 2 05 | |
| 8 00 | 3 35 | 1 40 | .Bellows Falls.. | | | 12 00 | 3 45 |
| P. M. | P. M. | P. M. | ARRIVE] | [LEAVE | A. M. | P. M. | P. M. |

### Local Trains between Claremont and Claremont Junction.

| | P. M. | | P. M. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leave Claremont Jc., | 12.50 | Leave Claremont, | 2.45 |
| Arrive Claremont, | 1.00 | Arrive Claremont Jc., | 2.55 |



*Donald R. Robinson photo*

"Mid the mountains of rugged New Hampshire,
where the granite is screened by the pine . . . "

—PASQUANEY SONG

EDGAR T. MEAD, Jr.

# THROUGH COVERED BRIDGES TO CONCORD

## A Recollection of the Concord & Claremont RR (NH)

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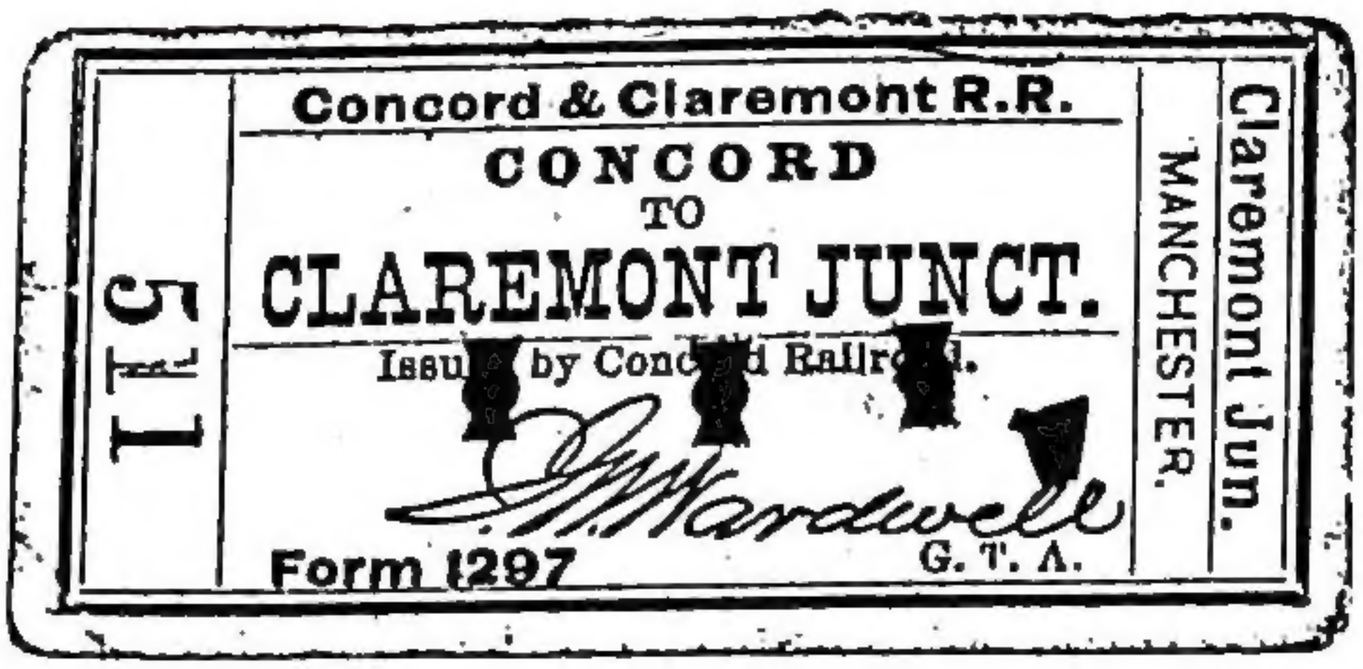
*Dedicated to Amie*




## INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time New Hampshire was honeycombed by railway lines. Had each and every proposal or charter been fulfilled, moreover, not a hill or valley could have escaped. There are still busy tracks if you know where to look, but hundreds of miles have been abandoned forever, a source of ever-widening wonderment to archeologists of the future, who could with reason doubt that so many lines existed.

Old maps and records claim there really was an independent railroad between Claremont and Concord in New Hampshire, and there are a few oldtimers who maintain to this day that steam-producing machines and wooden carriages full of country neighbors connected Newport, Bradford, and Warner with far-away places like Boston. I must confide that my first glimpse of this branch railroad, over 30 years ago, has since assumed the qualities of a mirage. It is now evident that any specific recollection of a shiny eight-wheeler with its two-car train departing from the great Concord trainshed was an evanescent dream, like Hawthorne's Celestial Train.

I found a number of sympathetic individuals who shared in my railroad fantasy: Stephen Winship, Charles A. Hill, Philip Hastings, George W. Perry, W. J. Fletcher, Donald Robinson, and even institutions such as Baker Library at Dartmouth, New Hampshire Antiquarian Society, Manchester Historic Association, and Claremont and Concord Railway. My editors included Charles E. Fisher, Dick Learned, and Russ Hamilton. I appreciate their suspension of belief.

*Edgar T. Mead, Jr.*
*Hanover, New Hampshire*

# THROUGH COVERED BRIDGES

## TO CONCORD

EARLY 19TH-CENTURY NEW HAMPSHIRE was a wilderness, an almost virgin territory for discovery, development, and exploitation. As communities in tamer parts of New England became overcrowded, families moved north along the Connecticut and Merrimack valleys. Frontier town Rumford became Concord, the capital, in 1808. After millowners from Massachusetts acquired water privileges at Amoskeag Falls, industry became a humming presence in New Hampshire.

Railroads came when city capital observed that canals could dry up and crude highways turn into quagmires. A Massachusetts syndicate incorporated Boston & Lowell RR in 1830; in 1835, the Nashua & Lowell. In New Hampshire, 1837-42, the Concord Railroad was built with Amoskeag Co. help, and an almost instant merger with Nashua & Lowell brought rails across the state line and into Concord via Nashua and Amoskeag, the latter's name changed to Manchester in the hope that its industry would one day rival that of its namesake city in England. Single-driver Hinkley locomotives began to bump back and forth in an ever increasing flow of freight, passengers and—profits!

Thus the Concord RR's wooden depot of 1842 was replaced in only five years by a commodious brick station, housing a well-paid staff and with room for a concert hall upstairs that hosted leading contemporary theatrical and musical talent. Around the corner from Depot Square was the Eagle Coffee House, the American House, the Phoenix. These were palmy days for stagecoaches, too, with six different lines radiating from Concord.

Financial success of these early railroads fostered vaultingly ambitious plans for expansion east, west, and especially north in a kind of manifest destiny toward Canada where lumber, grain, and mail transport was so often frozen to a standstill on river and lake routes. New Hampshire snow and mud in season kept progress plodding at oxcart speed.

Some fearful ones in Concord felt that more railroads would be inimical to the town's best interest by siphoning off its potential to less deserving communities. Others, however, thought it high time to be assertive, notably Prof. Charles B. Haddock of Dartmouth. He argued vehemently for a railroad to link Lebanon and Concord: "If we cannot maintain our position on the open field of generous and manly conflict, let us give up the State and go off in a body to Iowa or Oregon. Let it never be said that New Hampshire can only live within a Chinese wall that shuts out the enterprise and prohibits the intercourse of the rest of the world."

During 1844 the New Hampshire General Court members agreed with one another long enough to pass an eminent domain act which, through subsequent legislation, permitted enforceable acquisition of rights of way. Like a freshet in springtime, railroad activity burst forth.

That same year three charterings took effect—a line east (Concord & Portsmouth RR), the Boston, Concord & Montreal RR, and the Northern Railroad to build from Concord to White River Junction, thus tying a stout knot to Canada via the Vermont Central. In 1848 the Concord & Claremont RR was chartered, under President Matthew Harvey, aiming for the west bank of the Connecticut River at Windsor, Vermont. (Then as now, the boundary of New Hampshire was west of the river and included the river.) Also, the Contoocook Valley RR was projected west from Concord to Hillsborough Bridge and New Hampshire Central RR from Manchester west and north to Henniker. In most instances these charters indicated a terminus somewhat farther away than prudence called for.

The contagion soon earned for New Hampshire the sobriquet, "The Railroad State," but a multitude of railroads implied many railroad managements. These pockmarked the countryside with engineers' survey stakes and exerted multiple pressures on elected representatives to the state legislature.

For, whenever a charter was granted, it provided an excuse for a public show, as did the first spadeful of earth turned, the first spikes pounded, the last spikes hammered, the first trial train operated, and the first train in regular service launched. Most of these events were timed conveniently for good weather and thus an opportunity to strut the local cornet bands and militia companies. The politicians unleashed flowery clouds of pompous, long-winded rhetoric into the captive crowds as, on an appropriately pleasant morning in June, 1848, Daniel Webster himself attended the opening of the Northern RR in the company of rail buff Prof. Haddock and assorted dignitaries including a rival railroad president. When the through connection with Montreal was celebrated, Webster was joined in oratory by President Millard Fillmore and the Earl of Elgin, Governor

Bath
Landaff
Woodsville
N.Haverhill
Lincoln
Mt. Lafayette
Basin
Flume
Haverhill
E.Haverhill
W.Bradford
Bradford
Piermont
Warren
Orford
Orford V.
Lyme
Wentworth
W.Thornton
Campton
Plymouth
Bridgewater
Hebron
Bristol
Danbury
Hill
Wilmot
Meriden
Grantham
Springfield
Corydon
Claremont
Sunapee
New London
Newport
Charles T.
Newbury
Unity
Goshen
Lempster
Acworth
Washington
Marlow
Stoddard
Gilsum
Sullivan
Nelson
Roxbury
Hancock
Greenfield
New Boston
Francestown
Deering
Hillsboro Br.
N.Weare
Weare
Raymonds
Oil Mills
Goffs T.
Goffs T. Cen.
Goffs Falls
Manchester
Concord
CONCORD
Contoocook V.
Hopkinton
Henniker
Warner
Mast Yard
Fisher V.
Boscawen
N.Boscawen
Salisbury
Franklin
Shaker Vill.
Northfield
Canterbury
Loudon
Barnstead
Pittsfield
Chichester
Pembroke
Allens T.
Suncook
Robinsons Ferry
Dunbarton
Hooksett
Gilford
Laconia
Sanbornton
Union
Sanborn ton Br.
Gilmanton
S.Gilmanton
Alton Bay
Alton
Wolfboro
N.Wolfboro
Tuftonboro
Ossipee
Centre Ossipee
Moultonboro
F.Moultonboro
Squam Lake
Sandwich
W.Ossipee
Tamworth
Eaton Centre
Conway
Jackson
Whitefield
Littleton
Franconia
Profile
Profile L.
Echo L.
Twin Mt.
The Bowl
Willey Mt.
Mt. Lafayette
Mt. Carrigain
East Br.
Flume
Basin
Lincoln
Woodstock
Blue Mt.
W.Thornton
Carrs Mt.
Whiteface Mt.
Wakefield
Mt. Chocorua
Eaton
Tamworth
Freedom
Effingham
F.Effingham
Tuftonboro
Wolfboro
S.Wolfboro
Brookfield
Wakefield
Milton
New Durham
Farmington
Rochester
Barnstead
N.Barnstead
Gilmanton
Alton
Alton Bay
Gilford
Laconia
Meredith
Meredith V.
Fogg
Newfound L.
Cardigan Mt.
N.Hampton
Bristol
Danbury
Hill
Sanbornton
Union
Sanborn ton Br.
Wilmot
Meriden
Grantham
Springfield
Corydon
Claremont
Sunapee
Sunapee Lake

General of Canada. Was it sympathetic reaction when the almost brand-new locomotive *Daniel Webster* blew up at Danbury, N. H., on February 6, 1854?

Writing about the Merrimack River, Thoreau had already observed that "its real vessels are railroad cars, and its true main stream . . . may be traced by a long line of vapor among the hills." Those in towns along the Sugar, the Warner, and the Contoocook Rivers could be just as fervent, if not so literate, on the subject of railroads.

The new Contoocook Valley and the Concord & Claremont RRs had signed an unusual covenant stipulating that each could obtain rights over the other's line, depending on which built first. As far as Contoocookville—the "Stream Place" of the Algonquin Indians—the route planned for C&C had the easier gradients; it was, therefore, built soonest and the CV used the tracks. Builder for both was Joseph Barnard, a versatile contractor who also raised prize-winning Merino sheep and was later to supply the lumber for the redoubtable Civil War cruiser *Kearsarge* (cut from timber on Rattlesnake Hill north of Concord, but within sight of old monadnock Kearsarge itself). He opened the CV fork into Hillsborough in December, 1848—amid the habitual fanfare of speech-making—but it was not until July of '49 that the first inside-connected, woodburning locomotive seethed toward Bradford, slightly over 27 miles from Concord on C&C rails. The Contoocook-Bradford section must have been a stubborn one to build, because trains terminated at Warner for months thereafter. Trainfare was 70¢, Concord to Warner, where passengers had to take the stage for Bradford and beyond.

Next year, 1850, the New Hampshire Central blasted out its final miles along the Piscatoquog River, then over the hump into Henniker Junction on the CV, 25 miles northwest of Manchester.

The Concord & Claremont RR was authorized to issue 10,000 shares of $100 par stock. Most investors, including seven directors, were local people. In addition to the peculiar "who builds first" provision in the charter, there was a clause awarding profits in excess of 10% to the state. (This proved to be quite irrelevant.) The charter also considered the bleaker side of financial life; stockholder assessments were limited to $100 per share. Another provision required that $50,000 had to be expended by December 1, 1850, but trains were then already tooting their way up the Warner River.

George Washington Nesmith, 45-year-old president of the Northern RR, seemingly paid little or no attention to the trio of shorter lines, as no more than the buzzing of flies. The C&C did succeed in elbowing its way into the depot area with a track or two; consequently a court action awarded the Northern $2,700 for land appropriation. Onslow

64] **CONCORD & CLAREMONT R. R.**

Open from CONCORD to WARNER.

| Mls | FROM CONCORD. | 1st Train | 2d Train | Fares fr.C | Fares fr.B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TRAINS LEAVE | AM. | M. | cts. | cts. |
| | *Boston*..... | 7 30 | 12 00 | — | — |
| 73 | **Concord**..... | *10 30 | *3 00 | — | 155 |
| 76 | West Concord .... | | | 15 | 165 |
| 81 | Mast Yard..... | | | 30 | 180 |
| 84 | Contoocookville... | | | 45 | 195 |
| 91 | Reach **Warner.** | | | 70 | 220 |

| Mls | FROM WARNER. | 1st Train | 2d Train | Fares fr W | Fares to B. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TRAINS LEAVE | AM. | PM. | cts. | cts. |
| | **Warner**..... | 6 45 | 1 15 | — | 220 |
| 7 | Contoocookville... | 9 00 | 1 30 | 30 | 195 |
| 10 | Mast Yard..... | | | 50 | 180 |
| 15 | West Concord .... | | | 60 | 165 |
| 18 | Reach **Concord.** | | | 20 | 155 |
| 91 | " *Boston*..... | 1 00 | 6 00 | 220 | — |

*Or on the arrival of the trains from Boston.

☞ When Tickets are purchased at the Ticket offices, fares will be five cents less. All passengers are particularly requested to purchase tickets at the ticket offices. Tickets are sold at all the stations where there are station agents.

The upward and downward trains connect with the Contoocook Valley Railroad at Contoocookville, for West Hopkinton, Henniker, West Henniker, and Hillsboro' Bridge.

STAGES leave Warner Daily, on the arrival of the 1st and 2d Trains from Boston, for Bradford, returning, leave Bradford in season for the 8 45 and 1 15 o'clock trains for Boston, and on arrival of the first Train, for Newbury, Wendell, Newport and Claremont, and return to connect with the 1 15 o'clock train for Boston; and on arrival of the first train from Boston, for South Sutton, Mill Village, North Sutton and New London—returning to connect with the 8 45 o'clock train for Boston.

Also—On Tu., Th. and Sat., for Springfield, Grantham and Croydon—returning on opposite days to connect with the 8 45 clk Train for Boston. Stages leave Hopkinton twice a day for Contoocookville, to connect with 9 and 1 30 o'clk Trains for Boston—return leave Contoocookville for Hopkinton, on arr. of both trains.

Merchandise Trains run Daily.

JOSEPH A. GILMORE, Agent.

The down trains connect at Concord with the *Northern* and the *Boston, Concord & Montreal* railroads; the above roads also connect with the morning and afternoon trains for Contoocookville, Warner Henniker, & Hillsboro Br.

**Interest Warrant for $4.**

On the first day of July, 1861, the CONTOOCOOK VALLEY RAILROAD will pay the bearer, at the Mechanicks Bank, Concord, Four Dollars, for interest on their Bond, No. dated May 15, 1851.

Treas.

**Interest Warrant for $4**

On the first day of January, 1858, the CONTOOCOOK VALLEY RAILROAD will pay the bearer, at the Mechanicks Bank, Concord, Four Dollars, for interest on their Bond, No. dated May 15, 1851.

Treas.

**Interest Warrant for $4.**

On the first day of July, 1854, the CONTOOCOOK VALLEY RAILROAD will pay the bearer, at the Mechanicks Bank, Concord, Four Dollars, for interest on their Bond, No. dated May 15, 1851.

Treas.

**Concord & Claremont timetable reproduced from the back cover of the 1850 "Pathfinder Railway Guide." *Above:* Interest coupons, uncollected and uncollectable, from 1848 Contoocook Valley Railroad bond. *Courtesy of New England Antiquarian Society***

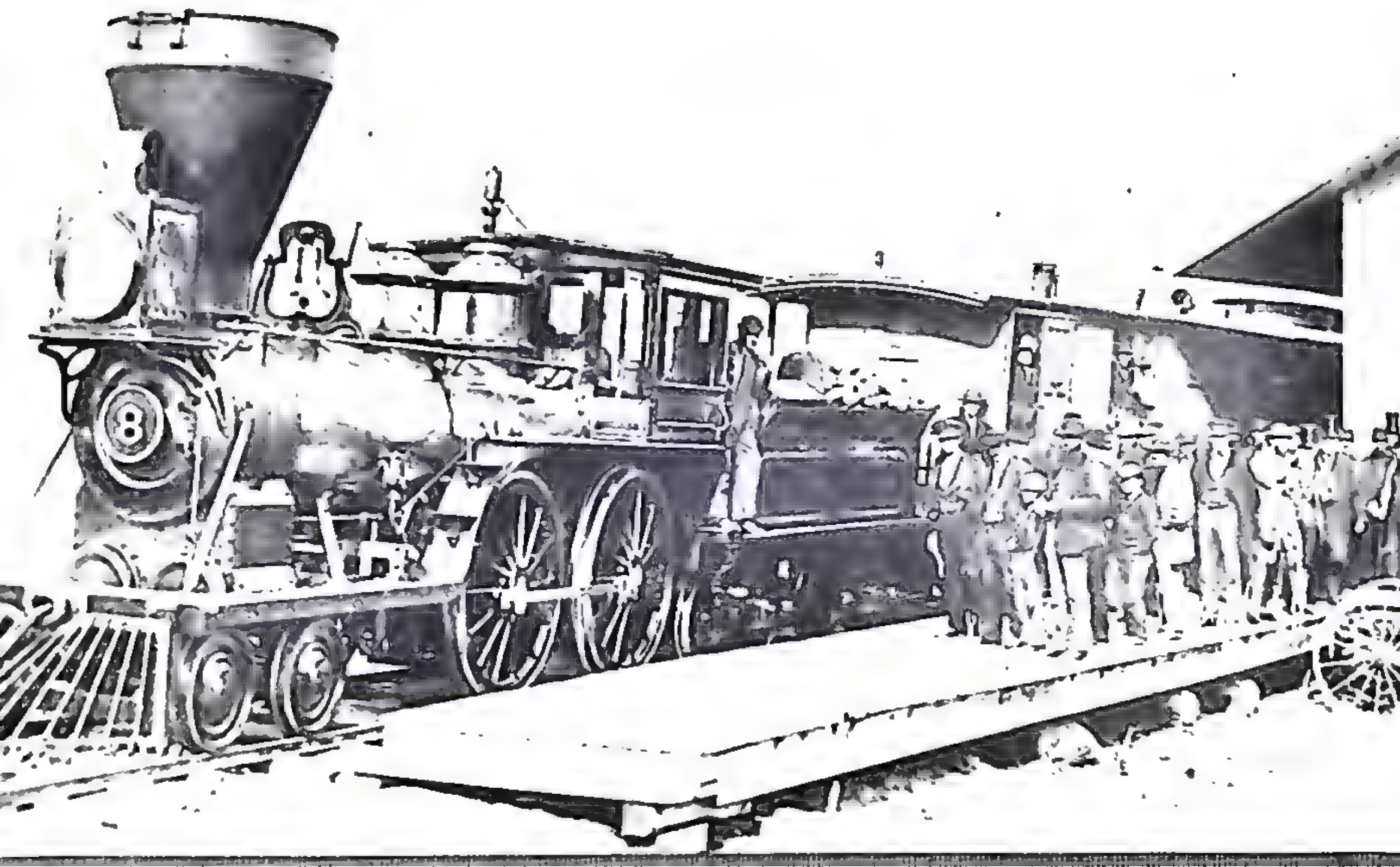
Stearns, who followed Nesmith as president of the Northern, apparently took keener notice, because the Northern RR became an investor in C&C bonds on December 19, 1855——at a substantial discount from issuance price. Stearns, a bearded patriarch of a man, had been "called" from the Nashua & Lowell RR in 1845. After building the Northern, he was appointed superintendent. He became president in 1853 and died in office after a long life of "industry, honesty, and economy" ending December 29, 1878.

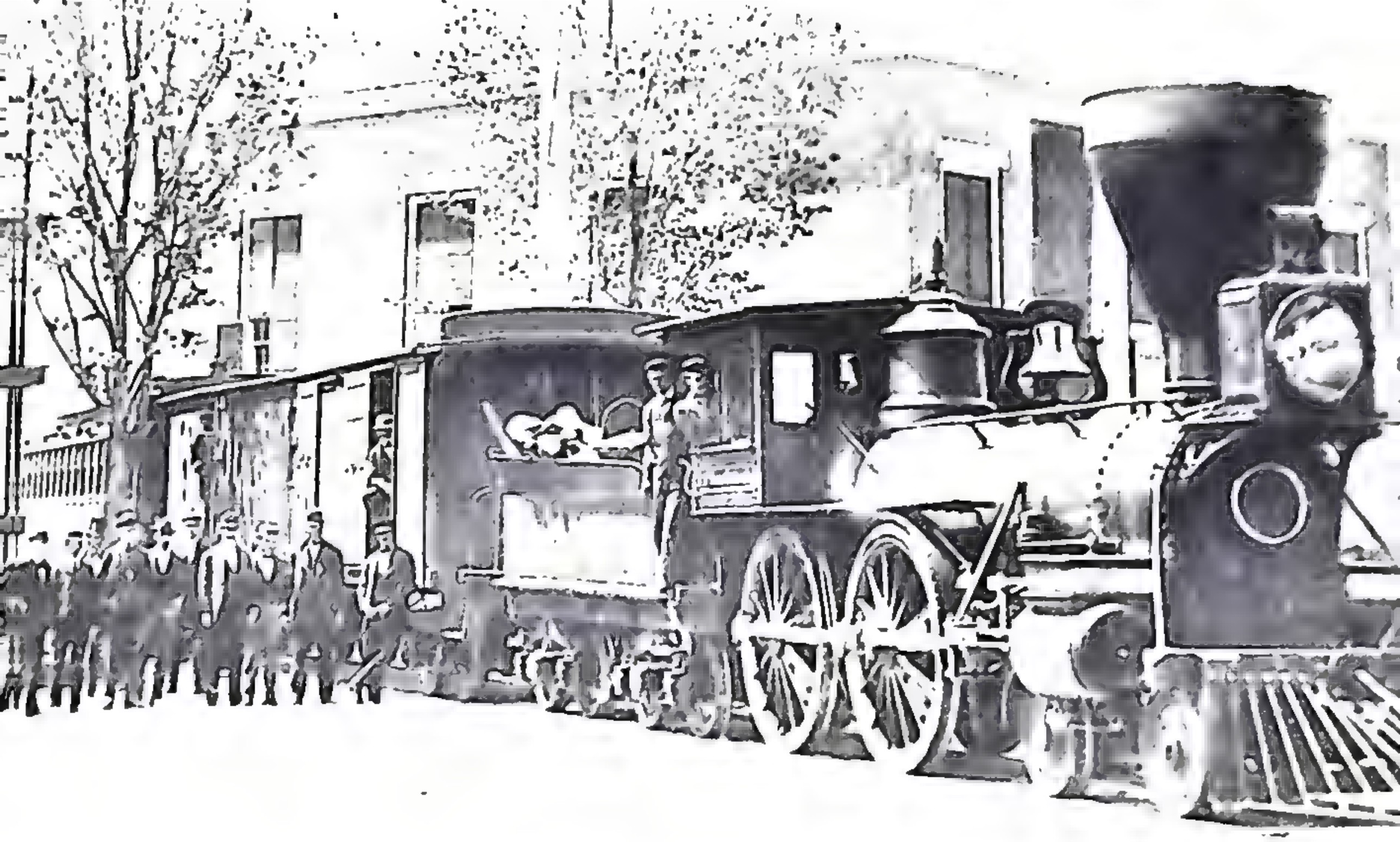
Although economic conditions gradually improved during the 1850s, there was not really enough traffic to support these struggling shortlines. Worse yet, there was an anti-railroad lobby emerging. This, together with abysmal operating records, held back the C&C, the CV, and the NHC for that matter, from building track to traffic-producing connections. As early as 1852 the roads were in trouble with their bondholders. On January 8, 1853, the Concord & Claremont and the New Hampshire Central were obliged to merge as the Merrimack & Connecticut River RR. The new company was authorized to issue 8,000 shares of $100 par, and it was empowered to sell 20-year 6% bonds to extend the track from Henniker to Bradford and Claremont. Anthony Colby of New London

was elected president and Edmund Burke of Newport one of three bond trustees. The proposed route thus favored the NHC out of Manchester and, if construction had ever materialized, the grades between Henniker and Bradford via Lake Massesecum would have presented scant operating problems. (The Contoocook Valley was not a party to the union of its neighbors, but suffered from the same traffic and operating problems. Accordingly, it was reorganized as the Contoocook *River* RR in 1856.) Even with a cheerful "prospects of the road were never better" note in the first M&CR annual report, the merger proved to be not enough; Burke and Stearns arranged a lease of its properties to the Northern.

Northern RR equipment was freely interchanged with its satellites, but C&C and CV both owned token rolling stock, if only to comfort timorous bondholders. First C&C engine was named *Claremont*——the eighth locomotive constructed by the Amoskeag Company in Manchester. Delivered at Concord in September, 1850, this 23-ton 4—4—0 boasted 70-inch drivewheels, 16- by 20-inch inside-connected cylinders, and copper tubes in its boiler. The *Hillsborough* for the Contoocook Valley was not delivered until October, 1852, and was in most respects similar except for cylinders and main rods mounted outside the engine frame. It was the 72nd locomotive by Amoskeag. The Northern RR must have worked engines considerably harder than C&C had ever been able to do, because *Claremont* exploded while in Northern service, December 19, 1855, at West Lebanon.

**"Grafton," No. 8 inside-connected 4—4—0 woodburner of the Northern RR used on the C&C. At Newport depot probably at or close to the first regular train operations.** *Photograph made by Howard Kimball; sold by J. C. Kelley of Newport, N.H.*





**"Franklin," outside-connected 4—4—0 Manchester-built engine owned by the Northern RR and shown here crossing Main St. in Newport on the Concord & Claremont RR. Probably early 1870s.** *Photo by Kimball, from J. C. Kelley*

The C&C also owned a flat-roofed baggage car and a deck-roofed coach, doubtless frequently supplemented by "running furniture" from other lines. C&C main and branch rail was all 56 pounds to the yard, some of it rolled in England. One order was the victim of shipwreck and rusts today on the floor of the Atlantic.

Observe now, amid the railroad wheeling and dealing, one Joseph A. Gilmore, a florid, thickset man acting as "Agent," or sales manager, initially for the Concord & Claremont, and thus also the M&CR. Be it understood that railroad agents, and even superintendents, in those days were important people, numbered among the best-paid executives of the state, to which status Gilmore brought ambition and flair. From M&CR he soon transferred to the opulent milieu of the Concord RR.

This entrenched and affluent carrier was not happy to see the strong hand of the Northern dipping into *its* territory at Manchester, potentially short-cutting *its* traffic from the south and west via the old New Hampshire Central line. In a deal co-engineered by Gilmore, probably with the knowledge of Concord RR directors, a man named Cornell purchased the Manchester-Henniker (NHC) section of M&CR. In the climate of fear generated by the 1857 Recession, M&CR security holders likely regarded the cash offer as manna from heaven. Perhaps a few eyebrows were raised when Gilmore emerged as operator of the branch

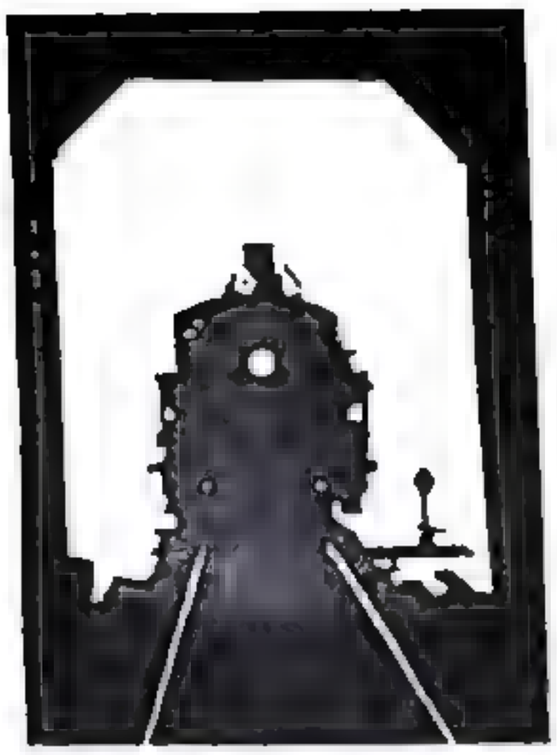
on a joint-profit basis, but this was small potatoes compared to what would happen next. On Sunday, October 31, 1858, the six miles of perfectly good track between Henniker Junction and North Weare were bodily removed!

According to a later historian, Gilmore "used the material for his own especial benefit" and was "ever afterward censured." Quite possibly, but success emboldened Gilmore to try out his talents in the state capital. There, after serving as speaker, he was elected Governor by the legislature after a hung vote in the 1862 general election. New Hampshire governors then had to stand for office every year, although customarily reelected for two or three additional terms. The artful Gilmore died in 1865. When his desk in the depot office was cleaned out, other "irregularities" came to light. For example, there was never found a precise record of how many railroad passes he gave out before elections——when a railroad pass was as valuable as a free gasoline credit card would be today.

The truncated, 19-mile section of M&CR emerged as the Manchester and North Weare RR, which served an indifferent farming area with a weary "accomodation" or mixed train for another 35 years. Traffic originating further to the west and south moved over the former Concord & Claremont directly into avaricious Concord RR hands. Was it any wonder that a violent anti-railroad group flourished in New Hampshire?

One rider of C&C trains vividly described this era in a book, the novel *Coniston* by the American Winston Churchill. Active in state politics, he chronicled the infamous "Woodchuck Session" in which the anti-railroad forces were thoroughly diddled and a charter obtained to extend the railroad beyond Bradford. The new charter was dated July 14, 1855, naming the extension the Sugar River RR.

*Donald R. Robinson Collection*



THE SUGAR RIVER debouches a dependable current into the Connecticut out at the western edge of New Hampshire opposite Ascutney. Sawyers and woolen mill operators claimed power privileges along its rapids until, at the peak of its use, some 130 separate water wheels were developing several thousands of horsepower. For transportation, there was a barge canal projected, and actually chartered as far back as 1818. When survey parties observed the ascent from river mouth to height of land at Sunapee and afterward calculated how many locks would be needed to float the barges down into the Warner River valley, some minds must have changed, because six- and eight-horse "pod teams" became the accepted method of hauling the area's trade in food and goods, flannels, broadcloths, and tweeds. The War of the Rebellion would boom this trade into flood proportions, the Sugar River mills, most of them, expanding as fast as funds and manpower became available.

But the local newspapers were always talking railroads——filling column on column with reverie and report——so that with injudicious proportions of courage and recklessness visions of railroads solidified into charters, hopefully for a rail network embracing Windsor, Springfield, and White River in Vermont, Lebanon, Greenfield, and Claremont in New Hampshire. Again, time would gell some of these charters into actual lines north-south along the east bank of the Connecticut. Meanwhile, the early 1850s saw "large and enthusiastic meetings" for railroads in all the towns. Unfortunately, most townspeople were unable to subscribe enough funds for building railroads at the then princely sum of $20,000 a mile. By contrast, the post-Civil War decade generated higher savings, better-crystallized transportation needs, and considerably improved technology that made railroads easier, therefore cheaper, to build. Come

springtime of '66, all the towns from Claremont to Concord had voted money for the railroad extension west from Bradford.

Throughout this decisive activity the Northern RR looked on with rapt attention, having a considerable stake both in the bonds and operations of M&CR. As no income had been derived from this source, the Northern was ready to foreclose, but veered suddenly to an altruistic attitude: "The proposed extension of the C&C RR to Claremont, while greatly benefitting the section of the State through which the road would pass, might also be of advantage to the bondholders in the present road to Bradford." From active support of the new Sugar River RR, Northern management moved, in 1870, to the extra precaution of forming joint operations with the still-ailing, still-independent Contoocook River RR. It appeared as though there really might be track from Concord all the way to Claremont—at last!

Seizing every possible occasion for glorification of the project, Colonel J. S. Walker, local war hero and Sugar River RR president, organized ground-breaking ceremonies along the route. At 6 A.M., May 31, 1870, the first earth was turned at Newport, N. H. Reported the *Argus,* "A large crowd was present, and the general joy of our citizens was manifested by the cheering of the multitudes, the ringing of the bells (including a genuine Revere on the Congregational Church), and the firing of cannon." An old gentleman of 77, Seth Richards, "struck the first pick" and a 78-year-old cleric by the name of Mason Hatch "wheeled the first barrow of dirt." The Claremont *Eagle's* sharp-eyed reporter commented on the scene that "it was thought by some that they could preach better than practice with a hand barrow of gravel, but they did their part considering the early hour they were called out."

There was apparently no formal demonstration at the first digging in Claremont, but the *Eagle* kept its eye on each phase of the work. Onslow Stearns, patriarch of the Northern RR and the original C&C, was then serving as Governor but was active also behind the scenes, and probably received regular progress bulletins from Shaw, the contractor, and a Mr. Manny who served as general foreman. The *Eagle* reported that "Mr. Manny with many *(sic)* Irishmen is making a spirited raid on the free soil near the eastern edge of Claremont. The steam shovel will be put into the Fairground Cut in the Fall." This 1870 model steam shovel was among the earliest of its kind. Its vertical boiler, iron chains, wooden beams, and rudimentary wheels snorting and clanking in the Fairground Cut must have attracted every young and old boy from miles around.

The contract for $875,000 reckoned with a variety of geological encumbrances en route but, most notably, a rock formation near Newbury. Along the Contoocook River construction had been relatively simple.

During the ice age, a body of water as great as Winnipesaukee formed behind an ice dam. Eventually this glacial Lake Contoocook wore through the melting dam and disappeared, leaving behind copious sand and gravel deposits ideal for railroad embankments. Between Bradford and Newport, however, there loomed a formidable barrier. Ancient Mounts Sunapee and Kearsarge looked down with paleozoic contempt upon these scurrying ants armed with mere picks and shovels. Even the glacier had failed to create more than a gradual opening between those peaks, and it had retired defeated, bleeding a trail of boulders all the way from Mt. Ascutney. Great glacial striations remain to this day. An ice dam had once forced Lake Sunapee to flow eastward toward the Merrimack. As the ice wall subsided, flood waters found a more pliant exit to the west near today's Sunapee Village. East of Newbury the ancient cascades stormed downhill during mesozoic rainstorms, pools of water like Todd's Pond continuing as a last testament to that fast-changing geology.

Newbury Cut, therefore, became the focus of the challenge to penetrate the rocky obstacle discouraging completion of the Concord to Claremont connection. Now a new-fangled steam drill was brought to bear, aimed at removing ten thousand cubic feet of vicious conglomerate rock. The monster's chief weapon was a 2½-inch bitt. A full head of steam inched it forward at the rate of nine feet in 50 minutes——rocketing progress compared to hand methods. Ten-pound charges of black powder reduced the conglomerate to fragments which could then be used on the graceful, spiraling grades up out of the valley floor several hundred feet below. So great was the amount of material required that one is reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne's trip with Mr. Smooth-it-away who pointed out a fill made of "20,000 cartloads of wholesome instructions" and "editions of books on morality" which subsequently metamorphosed into solid granite.

Fending off incessant opposition by the anti-railroaders in Concord, Col. Walker was able during 1871 to open 15 miles of line between Bradford and Newport. By September of the following year, the remaining 14 miles were completed, finally linking Concord with Claremont, 58 miles distant, and bringing to fruition a nagging dream of forty years duration.

The first creaking woodburner whistled and smoked its way to Newport "cheered by a jubilant throng of spectators," but this was nothing compared with the ovation which greeted the opening at Claremont——apparently the whole town turned upside down.

A test train had come through on September 10, 1872. Considering rocks, grades, and the numerous bridges, this successful run must have

*Facing page:* **Top Hat meets Derby in famous Newbury Cut, shown after opening of this portion of the line in the 1870s. Spindly iron rails look as if leading on to eternity. At right, "Grafton" 4—4—0 with the daily mail clanks through the Cut soon after the line was opened.** ***Photos by Kimball, from J. C. Kelley of Newport, N.H.***

been blessed relief to the hard-pressed directors. By September 16, the date selected for festivity, emotion surged to fever pitch. Local merchants, tingling with excitement and optimism, bought page ads proclaiming, "Look out for the engine, Claremont is a Railroad Town." At the main line connection, big lines were advertising de luxe drawing room cars heralding a new era of luxury for spartan New England. Old factories were being expanded and new ones built, utilizing the swift power of the Sugar River and the new transport advantage of a railroad which would take all manner of New England-crafted goods to the wild, wild west. There were factories making bobbins for the woolen mills, and in Sunapee sprawled a plant considered to be the largest maker of harness hames in the country. Another local product was wooden pegs used in the manufacture of shoes.

At the Fairground, a great and groaning board catered to the noble guests. It was called a "moving restaurant" by the *Eagle*-eyed reporter who filled columns with gossip on what was probably the greatest event in Claremont's history. The "intellectual feast" was served by a full galaxy of New Hampshire leaders. Former Governor Straw (who had possibly brought the wrong speech) used this railroad occasion to extol the virtues of a canal between North Weare and Bradford. Introduced as "the leading spirit" of the enterprise, Governor Stearns, long-bearded, stately chief luminary of New Hampshire railroading, praised all who had participated and each and every investor, not omitting the towns themselves. Claremont, for example, had contributed $100,000, surely an important, substantial "gratuity" for the times. The celebration lasted into the night, with a "hop" free of charge at the town hall and doubtless some bibulous gatherings convened to mark the event in suitably memorable ways.

It was not until September 28th that regular trains commenced to run between Claremont and Concord. A local train left at 6:55 A.M. and ar-

rived at Concord at 10:05, with a direct connection which reached Boston at 1:15 P.M. The so-called express left at 12:30 P.M., arriving only five minutes earlier than the local at 3:15 P.M., placing one in The Hub at 6:20 P.M. The railroad published timetable sheets, but a prevalent and probably effective custom was to print all local railroad schedules in the weekly newspapers. Was the new train a pleasant experience? "No complaints can be made as to the equipment," observed one early passenger, "the cars are neat and easy to ride in, and quite commendable to the managers." Another advantage was that tickets via the new route to Boston cost less than fare from Bellows Falls via Cheshire County. There were a few criticisms, to be sure. Trains sometimes blocked crossings and apparently the connection for New York, at Claremont Junction, was unsatisfactory.

The little railway crossed and recrossed the Sugar, the Warner, and the Contoocook Rivers at almost every opportunity, mostly over wooden bridges. Until 1915 at least there were still 40 bridges primarily of wooden construction; of these, 15 were the "through wood lattice truss" variety better known as covered bridges. It was a miniature version of western snowsheds when one sped over the rails through covered bridges to Concord.

Snowstorms were a demonic threat to the new railroad from the start. The rise from 288 feet above sea level at Concord to 1,126 feet at the summit near Lake Sunapee meant that what started as rain or a mild snowstorm at river level might become an arctic blizzard at Newbury Cut.

An incident on Friday, February 21, 1873, serves by way of illustration. It was snowing hard at 7:00 P.M. when the evening train was about to leave Concord for its western destination. Three eight-wheeled engines simmered behind a wooden snowplow, building up steam pressure for the chore ahead. Behind were baggage cars and coaches filled with a

weekend crowd. The great man of New Hampshire railroading, Onslow Stearns, on hand to see the expedition off, said "Boys, go ahead and do the best you can." It was reported that "the bells all rang and the locomotives, whose hissing and snorting had shown their impatience to be off, were soon in motion, bearing away the train into the desolate storm."

The little train plunged on through the drifts, reaching Bradford at 10:00 P.M. Here, Conductor Perry warned of the perils of snow and mountains and little locomotives. His advice was heeded, because the ladies and all but 18 of the gentlemen passengers debarked to find lodging and respite from the ravenous storm. There was a "jingling of bells," and the train moved off, crunching through the snow, drivewheels stamping hard to find firmer footing. At Morse's Cut, the snow was probed to a depth of six feet, and as the trackgrade grew steeper and the snow heavier, the little train stalled repeatedly. The crew would jump out and shovel bit by bit. Just beyond, the drifts were ten feet deep. There was nothing to eat on the train, and many had not stopped for supper. Meanwhile, wood in the tenders was getting low; Conductor Perry was of the view that it was the "rashest folly" to attempt further progress. The temperature kept dropping, and the damp snow began to freeze. The engines were kept hot during the night, and they were run back

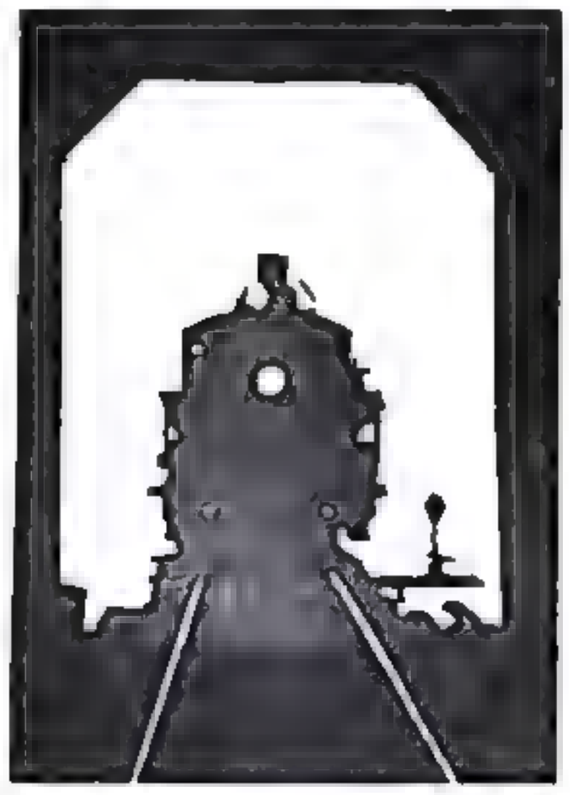
**Snow trains, then and now:** *(left)* **Three ten-wheelers and an eight-wheeler, their weight spaced out by freight cars, buck out a March storm, 1920.** *Davis Collection* **At right, Nos. 31 and 18 of present-day C&C shove a nose plow to clear away 4-ft. drifts after a 1969 snowfall.** *Mead Collection*

and forth to keep their water pumps going. Toward morning, the horrible snowfall began to cease, to be replaced by wind and more cold. It was decided to back downhill, hand shovelling where drifts had filled in. One must remember that the combined strength of these three little machines was less than one diesel switcher of a later vintage so that the train did not reach Bradford until dark. Meanwhile, the eastbound morning train had not even reached Newport, stuck tight near Northville. Not until late Monday could a plow and several engines break through from Concord. There was one glad note in tune with New Hampshire

railroad tradition. Two politicians were marooned on the train and had a captive audience well in time for spring elections.

Unfortunately, speechmaking and news realeases could not obscure the fact that the new Sugar River RR was no less financially embarrassed than its forebears, and the Northern was obliged to pay materials bills for several months. One source of financial erosion was the separate corporate existence of the Concord & Claremont, Sugar River, and the Contoocook River RRs. They were all brought together in 1873 as the Concord & Claremont (New Hampshire) RR, and the Northern RR thenceforth guaranteed its $500,000 of 7% bonds due in 1894, of which it owned $200,500. In the hopeful words of a news report, the amalgamation brought to an end many years of "worriment and loss." As a straight investment, one could criticize, but to the Northern it brought additional traffic and an alternate route when its own was clogged by wrecks or a traffic jam. More than anything, it blocked off other railroads' ambitions to muscle in on the Canadian interchange traffic.

Onslow Stearns remained a railroad builder to the end. In 1878, the year of his death, the Northern invested in a new line, Peterboro to Hillsboro (now shorn of its "orough" spelling), by purchasing $100,000 of 6½% bonds of a railroad promptly labelled the "P&H" RR. Its 18.5 miles of track offered a 30 miles shorter route, as compared to the roundabout Concord RR way between Concord and the then important rail center of Worcester, Mass. P&H commenced operations in 1878, and was soon rolling passenger and long, heavy freight trains into the C&C (NH) Hillsboro branch and thence to the main line at Contoocook. With this force-fed, added traffic, "Tookie" took on the aspect of a beehive junction.



Railroad profits were growing. In spite of being outmaneuvered by the Northern, the Concord RR was bringing 20¢ of each dollar to profit. The Northern was carrying 37¢ to profit, surely a case of virtue rewarded, and even the Concord & Claremont reported operating profits of 30¢ to the dollar, its revenues running around $140,000 annually, but interest charges were equivalent to about one-third of the gross.

Stearns' successor on the Northern, H. C. Sherburne, was of a slightly different cut. On the constructive side, he was able to unite the Concord & Claremont (NH) with the Northern, but his manipulations of the Sullivan County RR in western New Hampshire left á rather mixed impression. When summoned by the state government to appear at a hearing, Sherburne spake not and remained in Europe until his attorneys said it was safe to return.

In 1880, "Old Silkstocking" (Boston & Lowell) leased the Manchester & Lowell; a year later, in cahoots with the Concord RR, began to operate all of the "Lower Roads" into Massachusetts as one. On June 19, 1884, Boston & Lowell leased the Northern RR, which perforce included the Concord & Claremont (NH), the Boston, Concord & Montreal RR, and the Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers RR. This was a clean sweep from Boston to the Canadian border; the wizards of Lowell had done well. Meanwhile, in another part of the New England forest, Boston & Maine RR (originally a New Hampshire corporation!) was busily running trains between Boston and Portland, plus a number of middling-good branches in eastern Massachusetts. As the result of a nationally notorious legal brouhaha——the Northern RR Case, decided in 1889——the Boston & Lowell, a Massachusetts corporation, was found to be operating its New Hampshire lines illegally. Quick as a wink, Boston & Maine entered the fray and, when the dust cleared, the Lowell and Concord entrepreneurs were out for the count, and the entire New Hampshire rail net became a private arena of victorious Boston bankers.

The C&C found its way into the master's family as "the Claremont Branch" of B&M's Concord Division. Had it not always been a pet puppy of the Northern RR, dependent on others for locomotives, cars, and replacement rail? B&M continued the practice of using the branch as an alternate to other routes, but for reasons of economy, the bridges and track between Contoocook and Claremont were never upgraded to mainline standards, whereas between Contoocook and Concord, the track was improved to serve heavy granite traffic from Swenson's quarries on Rattlesnake Hill and heavy coal trains which ground their way up the sylvan back line through Peterboro. In fact the track to West Concord was eventually rebuilt to accommodate K-8 Consolidation engines, big 2—8—0's which were among the first super-power on the B&M.

The C&C on its own and as a branch had its share of wrecks. Snowplows took off across drifted fields, freights derailed, and the daily passenger trains often came to grief. Once in 1906 train No. 407 left Concord as usual at 3:20 P.M. and, at about 35 miles per hour, ran into a herd of cows some three miles beyond West Concord station. Engineer Herb Blake and his fireman piled off to inspect the damage and discovered that

one of the unfortunate beasts had bent the pilot of the engine. Another was wedged underneath. They whistled out the flag and brakeman Spaulding walked back as far as he could. Train No. 313, the Peterboro local, was ten minutes behind them, and Engineer Melvin failed to see Spaulding's frantic efforts to stop him. Spaulding did not even have time to light a fuse. Melvin jammed on the brakes, but too late. The collision almost completely telescoped the rear wooden coach of the standing train. It was pushed forward some 100 feet, slamming the tender right up against the boiler butt. The combination car and coach of the second train were not badly damaged, and only a few passengers were injured. Apparently everyone had left the train, full of curiosity about the cows, and thus stood clear.

In August of 1892, a train consisting of a ten-wheeler, 22 cars of Pennsylvania anthracite, and a 4-wheel "buggy," or caboose, left Peterboro at 3:30 P.M., arriving at Contoocook at 7:00 P.M. The ball signal gave Engineer Flagg clearance across the covered bridge into the yard, and he kept his train moving, trying not to stall on the sharp curve. Through a misunderstanding, the Claremont to Concord freight on the sidetrack commenced to move on to the mainline. Seeing the imminence of collision, Flagg whistled for brakes, but his train was moving too fast. Tom Buck, conductor of the Claremont train, also saw what was about to happen, and ran from his caboose to the switch which would take the coal

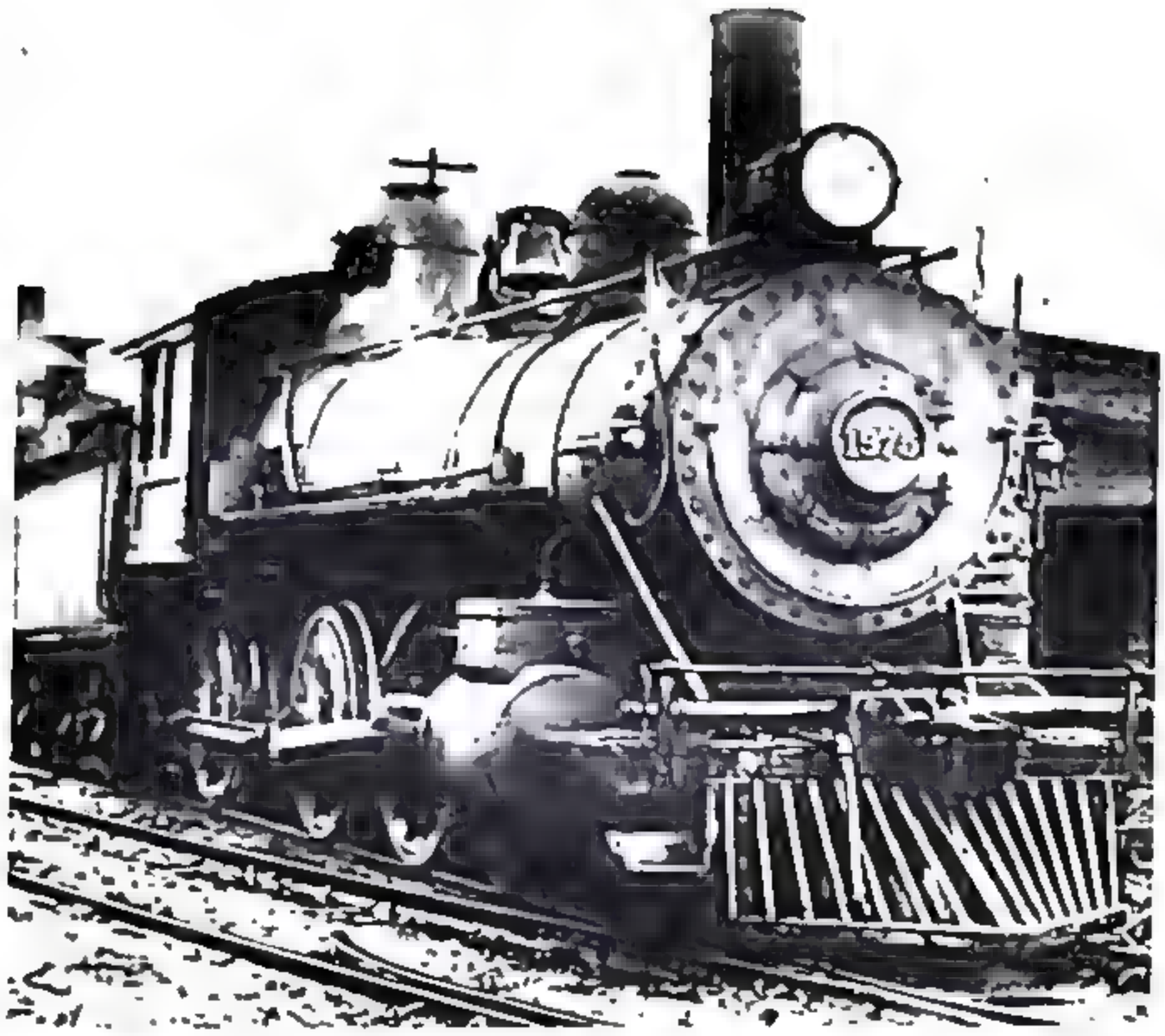
**Train wreck above Claremont, when the Sugar River washed out.** *Fletcher Collection*

train into the siding the local freight was leaving. The coal train struck the rear of the local, derailing eight cars and catapulting two of them into the river. The engine of the coal train was badly wrecked, but perhaps not as badly as if it had continued down the main for a side-swipe collision that could have wrecked both engines and tied up "the main."

The wrecker from Concord was called, and by 4:00 A.M. in the morning of the following day, enough progress had been made with the wrecked and spilled cars so that another engine could back up to the coal train and haul it into Concord. En route the ill-fated train of coal broke in two, probably because of damaged couplers. The three rear cars and caboose came crashing into the head end when it stopped to investigate. The force was such that two cars were derailed and partly tipped over, and 15 crossties were driven ahead in such a way as to form a solid block of wood! For many years afterward, this was referred to as the famous "Double Wreck" on the C&C, recalled with awe and thankfulness that no life was lost. C&C oldtimers believe as an act of faith that the West Concord station name was changed to Gardner because of this wreck. There were indeed so many stations which were "East" or "West" Something that a hastily written train order could easily lead to confusion. (It was actually a lethal wreck in Massachusetts that apparently inspired name changes all over the system.)

Typical of washout perils was a late February wreck in 1915. Eight-wheeler No. 983 was in charge of train No. 402, the early morning Claremont run which met the "Paper Train" at Concord. About two miles east of Claremont, where tracks follow the Sugar River rather closely, the fast current overflowed and was clawing at the roadbed. Engineer Canty of Claremont was easing along when the roadbed sank and slid toward the river, taking the two-car train along with it. Back in the train, Conductor Chandler was punching tickets, when all at once the coach heaved violently to the left. He was thrown against the side of the car, sustaining serious head injuries. The engine had just managed to reach firm ground when this took place. Then the coupler bar between engine and tender broke, and the engine shot off around the curve while tender and train sank into the chill water. Although the train was well filled, a passenger from Nashua and three of the train crew were miraculously the only ones hurt. At higher speed it is likely that all might have drowned. Fortunately, speed was never much of an objective on this mountain branch.

A few years later one of the old Manchester ten-wheelers, No. 1979, was northbound to Claremont with an extra freight movement. It was quite late one April Sunday, after torrential rains. Near Lake Sunapee, a tributary rivulet overflowed and at the stopped-up culvert a whole section of roadbed was carried away. Unaware of impending danger, Engineer At-

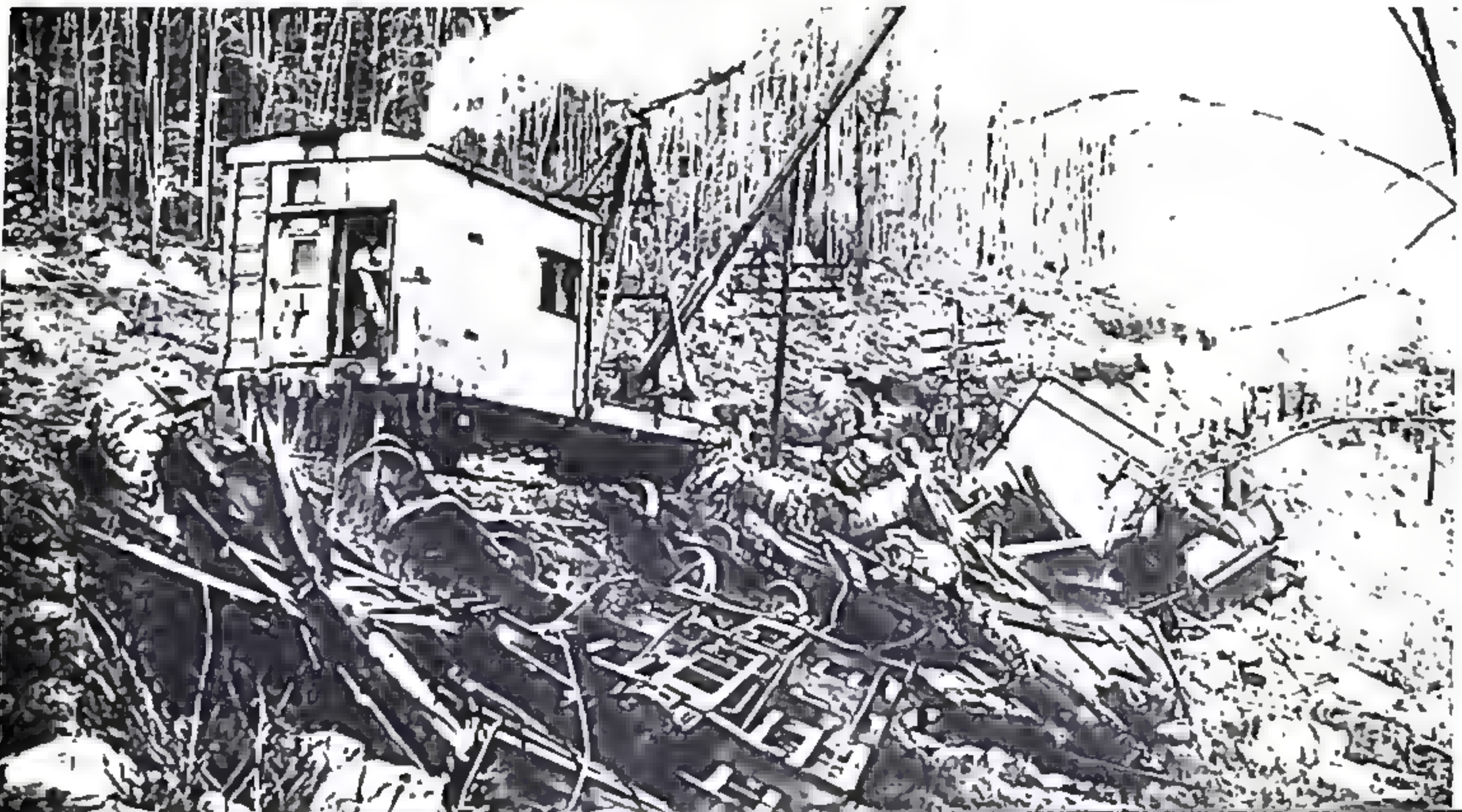


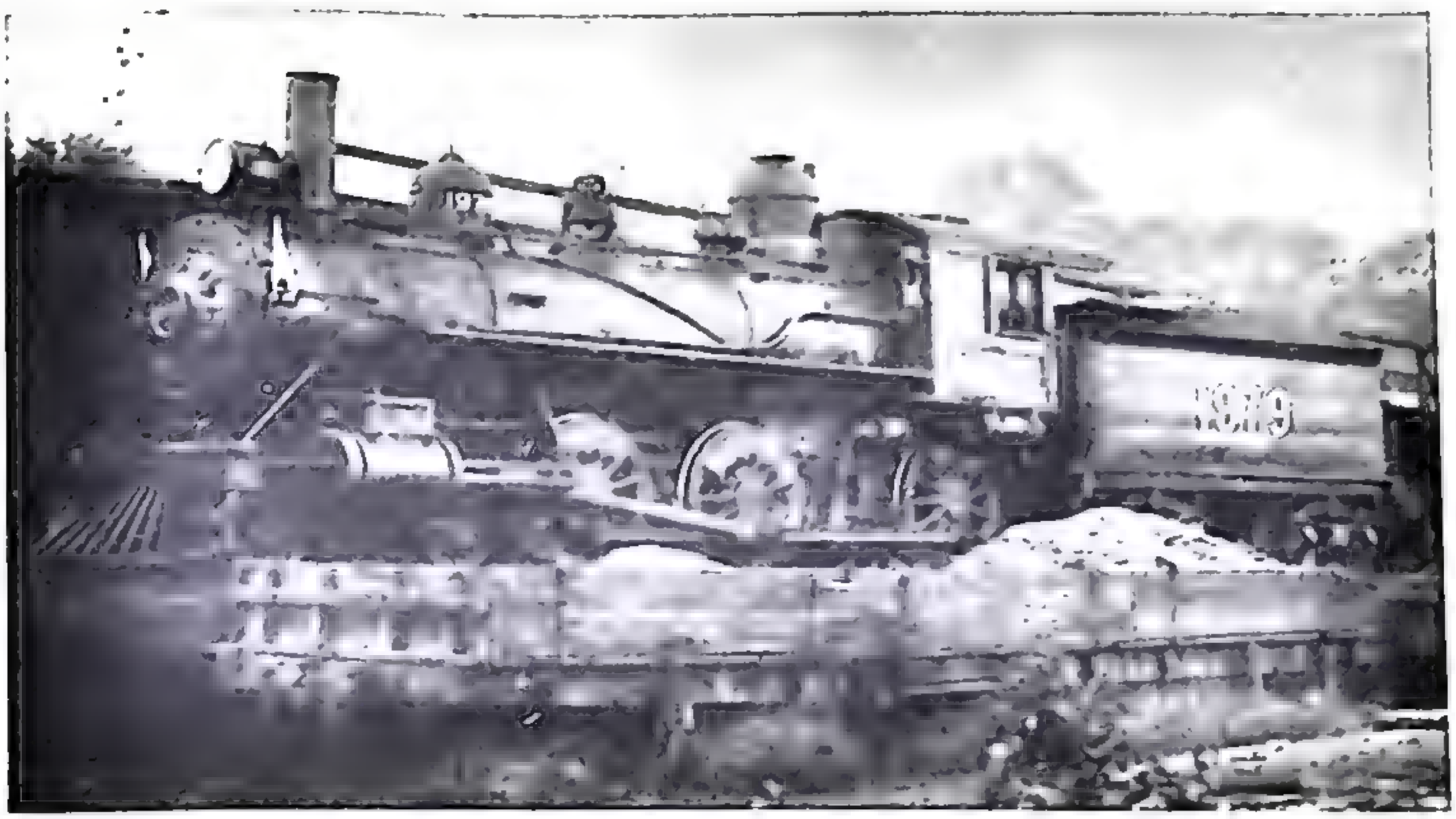
**Manchester-built ten-wheeler No. 1975, shown here at Claremont engine house, and other ex-main line 4–6–0s performed most of freight chores a half century ago. Antique B&M ten-wheeler at the right is ill-fated No. 1979 which came to grief in wreck pictured below.** ***Both photos from Fletcher Collection***

wood urged the old ten-wheeler upgrade toward the summit when down went the engine, the tender jackknifing on top of it. Three men riding the engine were instantly killed when the rear of the engine settled down into the stygian hole.

Nevertheless, most memories of the Claremont Branch were happy ones, of which the development of Lake Sunapee as a premier resort was surely among the most delightful. It ran the pattern of many a "last resort." Artists, poets, clergymen, and professors would be among the first settlers, followed by what Cleveland Amory called "the nice millionaires." Sunapee attracted more than its share of these from New York, Boston, and Concord. Prior to the railroad, visitors came from afar by stagecoach to Sunapee Harbor. The first steamboat on Sunapee ("Water of the Wild Fowl") was the *Surprise,* a 65-foot sidewheeler launched in 1859, but not until 1876 did steamboating begin in earnest. *Penacook,* later renamed

**Jackknife wreck near Sunapee which killed the engine crew and ended No. 1979's useful days.** ***Fletcher Collection***



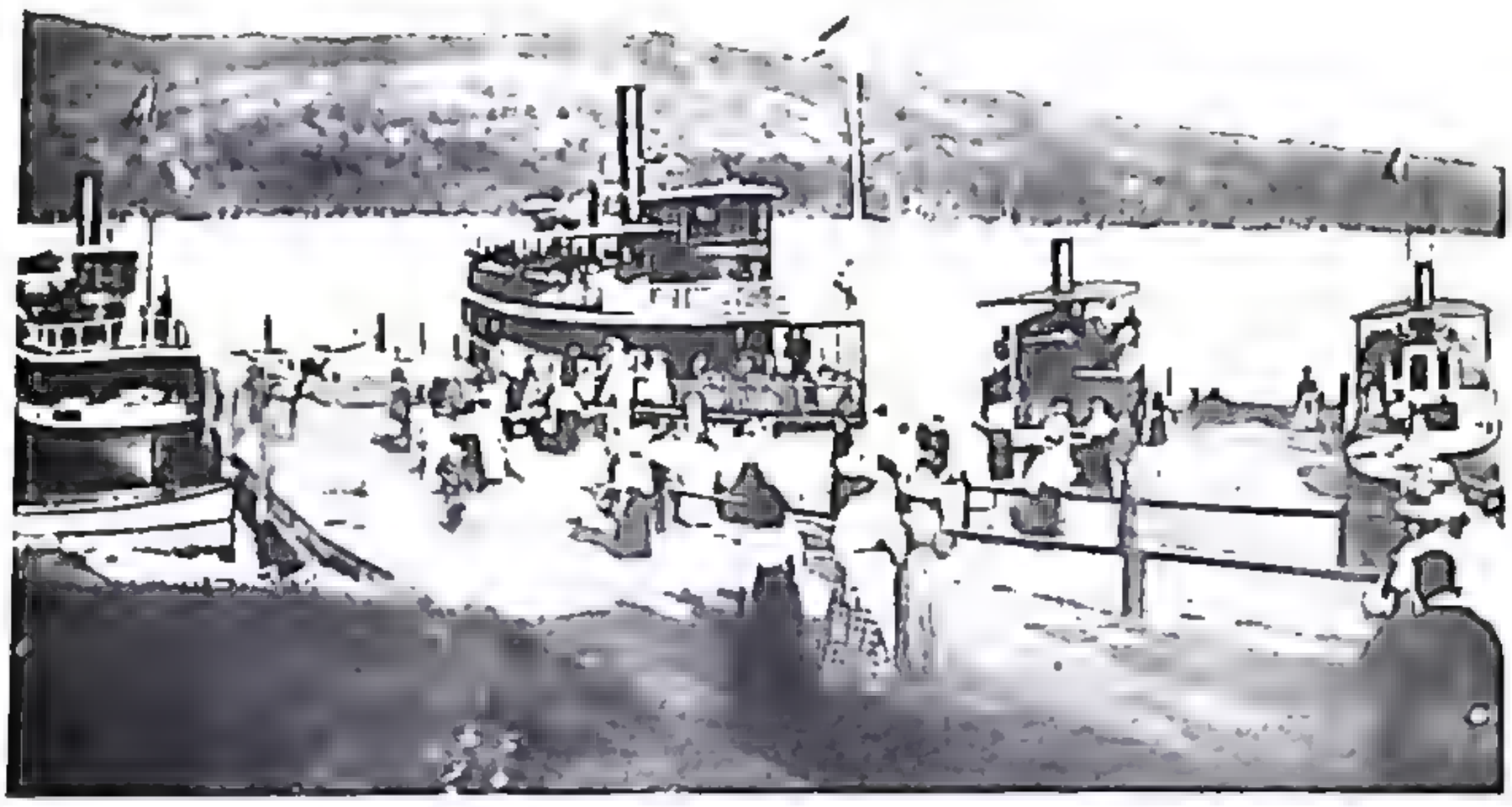


*Mountain Maid* by Captain Young, was first of the post-Civil War fleet. The Woodsum brothers from Maine, Frank and Daniel, rustic characters seeking their fortune, decided that a great future lay with Sunapee boating. At the height of their success, four snorting steamers composed the Woodsum Steamboat Company. A rival organization operated the *Edmund Burke,* named for that admired civic leader (and M&CR investor) who created the colony of Burkehaven. Numerous individuals operated coal-burning and naphtha launches. At regatta time, with bunting flying and whistles piping, the combined fleet of steamboats created a memorable scene.

Originally steamers docked at Newbury, where prehistoric Lake Sunapee had spilled eastward. Deeper drafts, however, meant that a different connection with the railroad had to be made, and new docks were built further west. Familiarly known as "Sunapee Lake Station," Lake Sunapee was later called Edgemont and later on, as times changed, was moved still further west, about three miles from Sunapee Harbor. There were at least three different station buildings at Lake Sunapee, and a massive wooden gallows turntable used by helper and weekend visitor engines. From a coal track fuel was dumped into a shelter below, to be wheeled dockside and into the steamboat bunkers.

The Woodsums owned a hotel at George's Mills, at the head of the lake, and each morning during the season two boats would depart, a smaller one to provide local stops and a larger one which ran express to the railroad connection. One or two boats would also leave Sunapee Harbor to meet the train, and doubtless many a passenger went along just for the ride and the pleasures of train watching. The trains stopped for

**Shown before the fire is the first of the Sunapee Lake stations. Locals await the train from Concord, while a three-man engine crew guides a coal barrow to the dock alongside "Lady Woodsum."** *Clark Collection*



**Hustle, and several bustles mark this 1910 scene of embarkation from the "Paper Train" into steamers "Kearsarge," "Armenia White," "Ascutney," and "Weetamoo."** *Clark Collection*

**Well-heeled visitors to Sunapee eagerly transfer from the cindery Branch trains to the steamboats. Shown is the second station, about 1900.** *Hill Collection*

water, so there was plenty of time to inspect each gleaming locomotive with its great drivewheels, air-pump sounds, and tantalizing hot oil smells.

The first boats met the 8:10 A.M. train *for* Concord, arriving 20-or-so minutes ahead of time to offload trunks and baggage. After round trips to Sunapee Harbor, George's Mills and, if the *Burke* was running, to Blodgett's Landing, the flotilla would ripple back to the Lake station in time for the 11:32 train *from* Concord, bearer of news from the Big City right off the "Paper Train" from Boston——the newspapers taking precedence over other cargo, perhaps as a change of pace from reading matter in this vein: *Granite-throned Queen, deep-bosomed Sunapee!/The Isis of our Northland, rive thy veil/And ope thy beauty . . .*

This effusion, by Dr. Quackenbos, Professor of Rhetoric, was rivalled by other rapturous opinion, comparing Sunapee—favorably—with Lochs Lomond and Katrine. F. M. Colby, writing in the *Granite Monthly,* de-

**Water tank, station, and gallows turntable assisted B&M train operation at the Lake Sunapee steamboat transfer.** *Clark Collection*

clared: "Sunapee is a tamed beauty; her coyness has long since disappeared before the hand of man. On her pearly bosom glides the miniature steamer and the fisher's skiff. Around her nude loveliness, civilization has extended a gird of happy homes. Pleasant hamlets, picturesque summer houses and fine hotels are mirrored in her placid waters. The surrounding hills, lofty, historic Kearsarge, and the green peaks of the Grantham and Sunapee Range look down upon busy industries and pleasant social scenes." Etc. Etc. The summer-homers believed with other 19th-century romantics that the world was beautiful and that science and modern wisdom would rectify all ills, if indeed there were any.

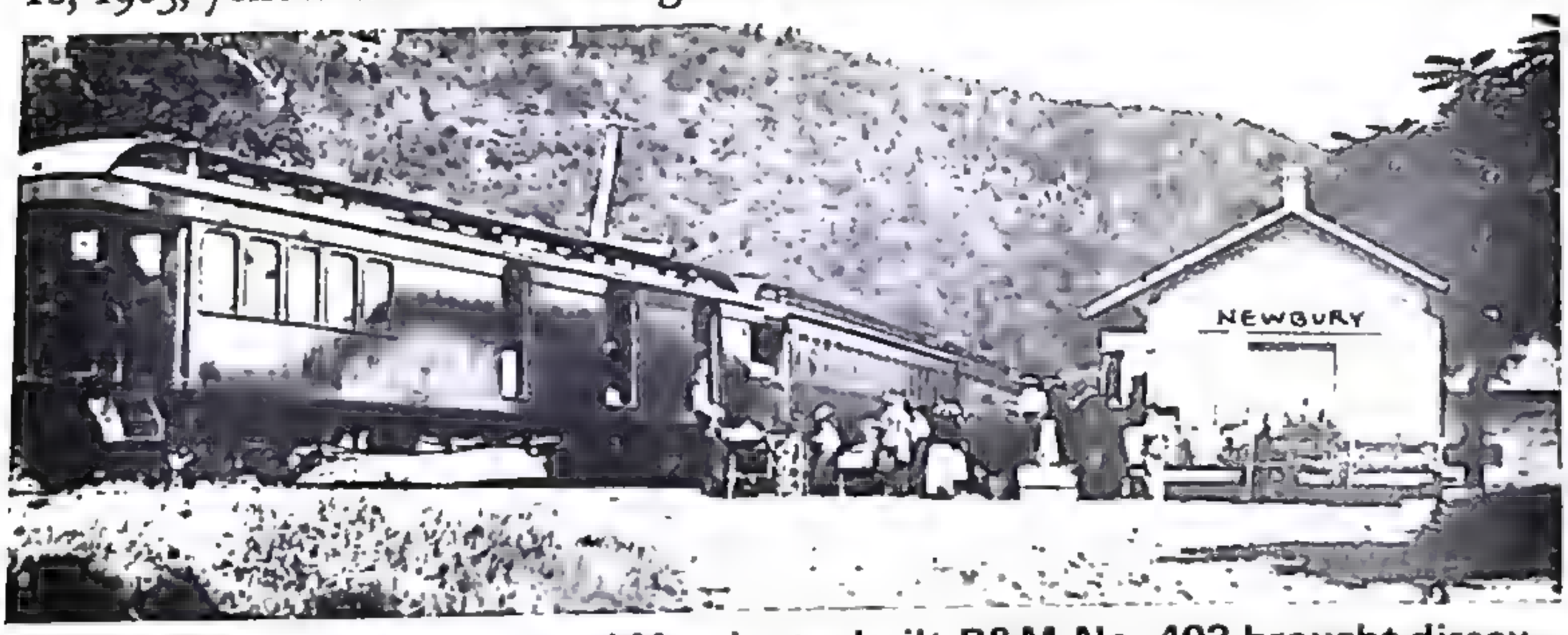
The pride of the Woodsum fleet was the *Armenia White,* named after a proper matron of Concord, and there were also the *Kearsarge, Ascutney,*

and the *Weetamoo* named for Whittier's Indian princess. Imagine the sharp puffing of *Weetamoo,* and the white breath of her steam exhaust, as she patrolled the lake on a nippy April day, meeting the authoritative steam train from far-off places at Lake Sunapee Station! The busy little fleet met four regular trains a day, not to mention extra trains which heaped additional hundreds on the Ben Mere and Glenliden Hotels. Sometimes there were Pullman cars from distant cities, which arrived Saturday morning and spent the weekend on a sidetrack until passengers were ready to head home Sunday afternoon.

There was still another service performed by the railroad. Trainloads of ice chunks cut from the lake and stored until warm weather would tiptoe down the steep hills toward Boston, usually at night, when local passenger and freight trains were tucked in bed. Tying down the brakes on Newbury Hill must have been a terrifying yet exhilarating experience on a starlit summer night. At any instant the train might shoot out of control, leaving one to decide whether to jump or ride an ice-packed juggernaut downgrade.

In spite of limited leisure time in the 19th century, New Hampshire factory folk made the most of holidays. In Concord, the 12-mile narrow-gauge Concord Street Railway, started as a horse-car line in 1881, laid trackage into the village of Penacook by 1884. In 1893 cars were operating to Contoocook River Park. Here were lawns and shade trees for picknicking, and a little steamboat plied the quiet river. Traffic reached such volume that narrow-gauge steam dummy engines were introduced, taking trains of former horse cars from Blossom Hill Cemetery all the way to Penacook. These endured to 1903, when the entire line was electrified and standard gauged.

There were street railway operations at the western end too. On August 16, 1903, yellow wooden cars began to function on the Claremont Railway




**Shiny coaches, baggage cars, and Manchester-built B&M No. 403 brought discoverers of Lake Sunapee to Newbury depot back in the Nineties.** *Both photos from Hill Collection*

and Lighting Company's eight-mile line between Claremont Junction and West Claremont. The big cars were typical of many a country trolley, having a sizeable baggage compartment at one end for handling sacks of mail and packages. The basic fare for years was 5¢. Cars ran every half hour, connecting with Boston & Maine trains on the former Sullivan County RR for New York and White River Junction. As did other traction roads in Vermont and New Hampshire, the Claremont line handled freight and, in 1907, General Electric delivered a shiny motor which was a mainstay for years. On one end, a brass bell; on the other, a raucous three-barrel air whistle. Factories of Claremont were built along the steep Sugar River, whereas the steam railroad tracks followed a more gradual ascent further south. Thus, passengers from New York trains, bound for the north side of Claremont, would surely take the trolley in preference to the steam train for Claremont station, which the trolley intersected at Pleasant St. The freight interchange was at Mulberry St., and the line was built north to the river where it joined the passenger line on Main St. To serve various industries, a series of switchbacks in the Lower Village was constructed, permitting an intricate choreography of switching. A brakeman rode one end of the "motor" to make sure the trolley pole stayed on the wire. The passenger trolleys, open and closed, growled their way through Claremont streets for the last time in 1930. Freight operations continued.

As a concession to the community, the Branch did offer a noonday service, which meant simply that the engine and cars from the morning train from Concord backed up to Claremont, lay over for an hour or so, and then returned to the Junction, ten minutes away, to form the afternoon train for Concord. There was a Sunday afternoon excursion between Claremont and Lake Sunapee for many years, also between Concord and Sunapee.

Boston & Maine control of the Northern, the Claremont Branch and other lines in 1887 preceded still other acquisitions, such as the regal Concord & Montreal RR. When, within a few years, everything was huddled under one financial roof, uniformity pervaded all corners. Main lines became high-railed and strong-bridged for big, new engines and heavy freight cars. Gone were the yellows, and the blues, and the varnished hardwood; in their place came dark coach green which soon weathered to black. Concord grew fast as a railroad town; by turn of century, there were 25 regular passenger departures every day, and many freight trains. New shops and an engine house south of town comprised the largest local industry, employing on the order of 1300 persons.

B&M branches remained true to rustic bridges, steep grades, and quaint ways. Mainline conductors were known for the bite of their tongues, and off-duty conversation of other B&M employees on occasion revolved around who was crabbiest on such-and-such a division. By contrast, on the little branches of the Concord Division, which included the Claremont and the P&H, friendliness was the rule. Marion Gerrish recalls taking her cat along on a train trip down river, anticipating that it would have to be exiled to the baggage car. Along came the conductor who, seeing the cat in a carrying case, said "Take him out on the seat and let him enjoy his ride." So Bobby, the cat, in collar and leash rode in comfort all the way. One time the train bumped to an unscheduled stop, but passengers were apparently not fazed to see the conductor walk to a neighboring farmhouse and return with a hot mince pie. About ten miles further, the train stopped again. The conductor got out, delivered a package to a nearby house and was rewarded with a loaf of fresh-baked bread and a plate of cookies.

On the day of the 100th birthday of the Concord & Claremont, reminisces State Senator Jack Chandler, a group of Warner residents hopped on the train and passed out candy, cigarettes, and cigars. It was Halloween and everyone was dressed in costume. One can imagine the shock that ran through one passenger's mind upon being roused from a deep sleep aboard the cosy train, and perceiving this ghoulish throng.

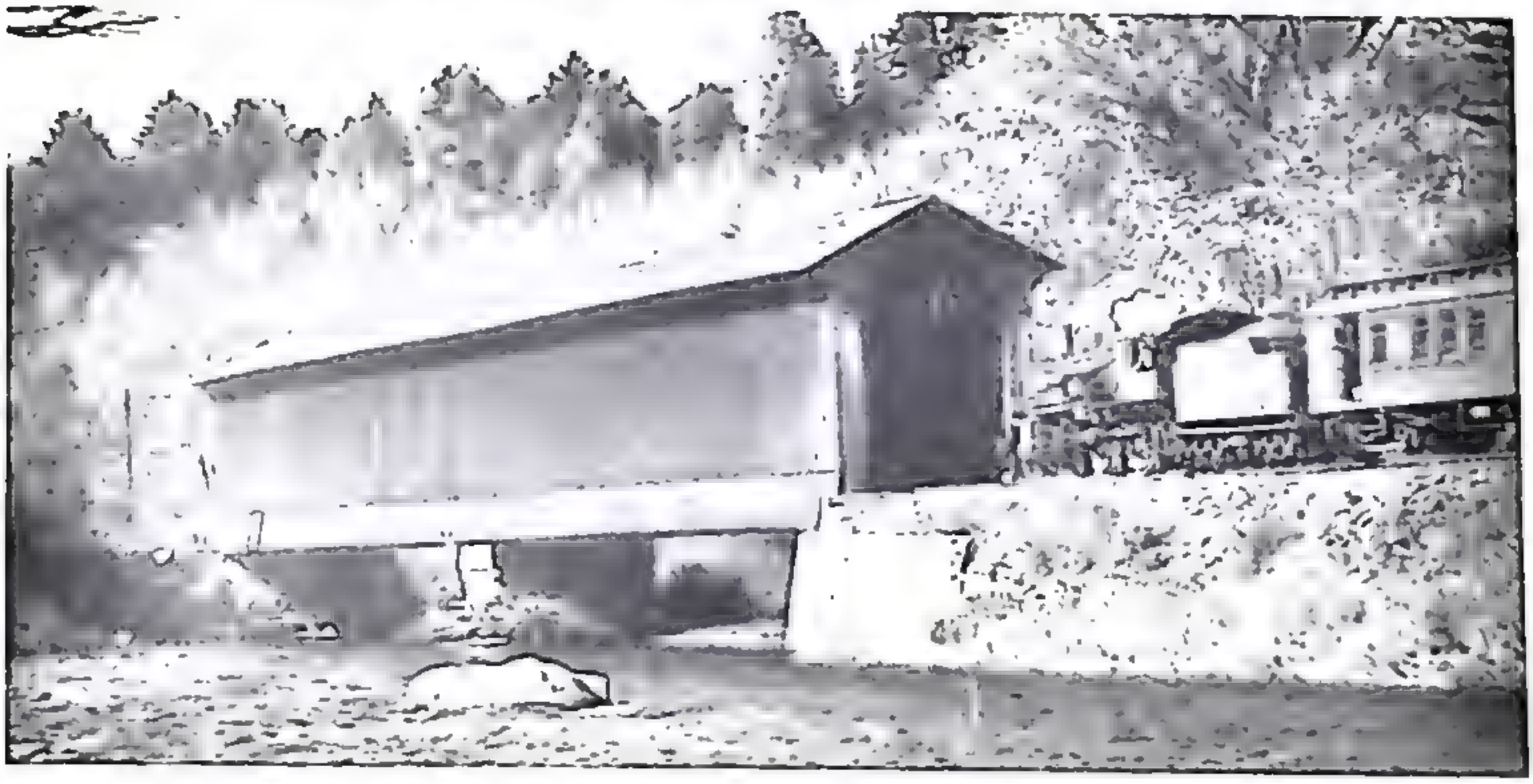
Summer excursion trains sometimes required two engines to heave

over Newbury Hill. During subzero weather, all trains ran jam-packed. Jack Chandler recalls meeting the train in 1943 when the thermometer was 40 degrees below zero. No automobile could start that day and passengers were arriving at the depot via one-hoss sleigh. Bathed in steam, the little train shivered and shook, but got everyone into Concord in time for a session of the General Court. During World War II, when gas rationing went into effect, the normal two-car train was expanded by a third coach to take care of the overflow and B-15 Mogul 2—6—0's replaced the faithful A-41 class Eight-wheelers, which went down from the mountains to less demanding duties around suburban Boston.

Sometimes a wreck or a washout on the high-class Northern line between White River Junction and Concord would force mainline trains over the Claremont Branch. Although big Pacifics were theoretically able to travel the Branch, in practice the mainline engine would be replaced at Claremont Junction with doubleheaded Moguls for the run over the mountains. What a sight to see the *Redwing* or the *Alouette,* in cheery Canadian Pacific colors, highballing through the covered bridges!

That any of the covered bridges have survived to the 1970s must be ascribed as much to good luck as to preservation efforts. Fires, derailments, and floods contributed to a high mortality rate. The bridge still standing at "Tookie" was built in 1849 and rebuilt in 1889 after B&M sprinkled heavier power around its potpourri of branches. Along with a neighboring white-painted highway bridge, the old red railroad bridge stood firm until 1936, when both dissolved downstream in a flood. The B&M bridge was towed back and anchored in place again, only to be buffeted again by the 1938 hurricane.

**Mogul No. 1431 crosses covered bridge No. 176 near Chandler Station en route to Claremont. Bridge No. 178 is pictured in frontispiece.** *Philip R. Hastings photo*



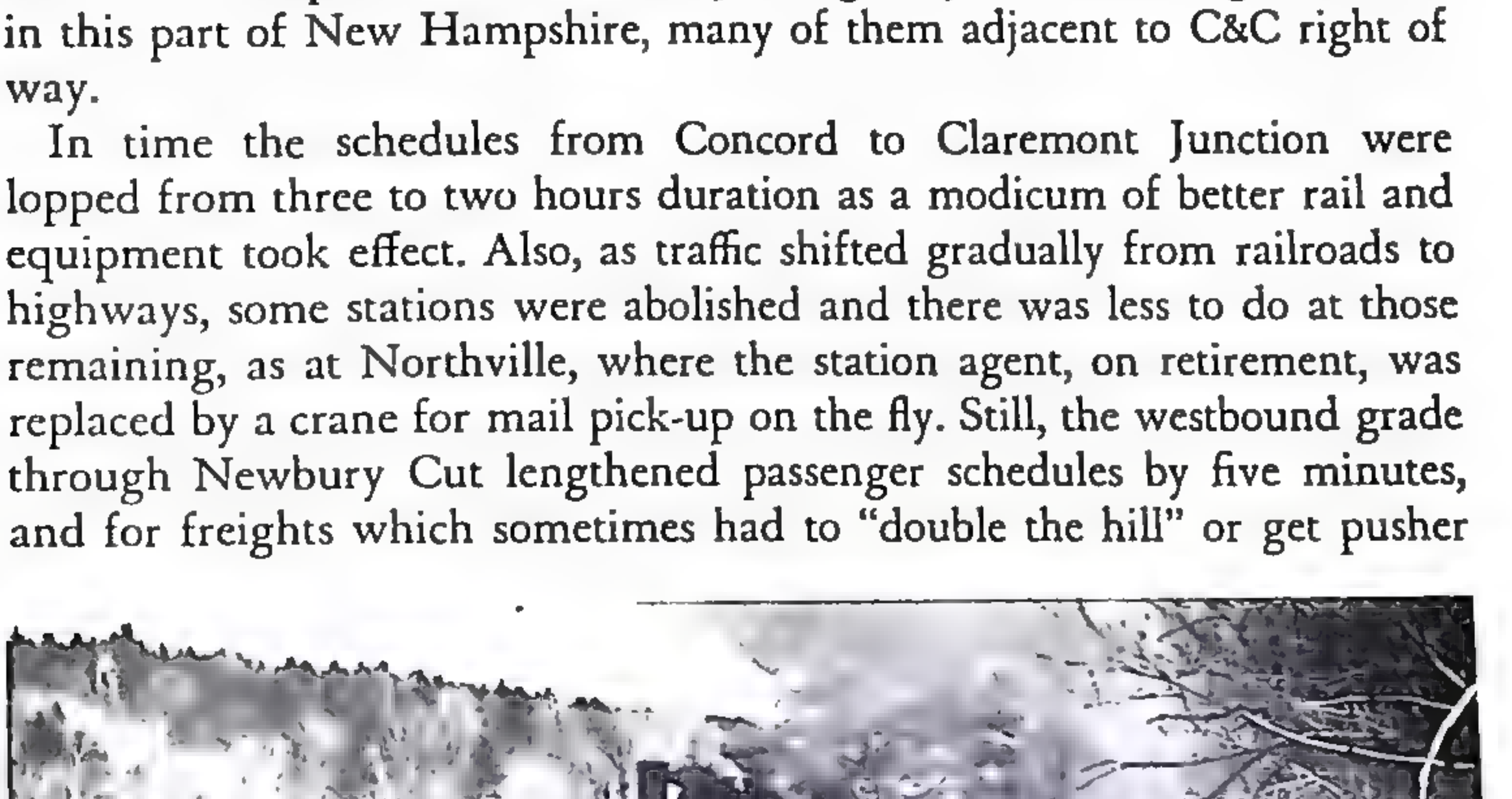
**Framed by the covered bridge across the Contoocook River, Mogul No. 1490 waits for the go-ahead while working local freight out of Concord.** *Philip R. Hastings*

The 157-foot, single span required a total of 96,000 board feet of lumber, mostly white pine, with some hard pine and hemlock. It was trunnelled together with 2,600 wooden pins, and used 1,800 pounds of steel stayrods and another three tons of hardware to corset its weary bones. Bridges 176 and 178 between Newport and Claremont still serve the

Claremont and Concord Railway tri-weekly freight. Both were built for the Sugar River in 1871 to the Double Web Town-Pratt RR lattice design. The bridge at Wright's is 122 feet in length (with a laminated arch), and the one east of Chandler's employs two spans and a central masonry pier to support its 228-foot bulk. Both were rebuilt in the 1890s and are well-maintained under current ownership, supporting heavy cars of grain and lumber with great confidence.

The elegant little 100-foot bridge at Bennington, built in 1877 for the P&H, was unfortunately consumed by fire supposedly originating from brake-shoe sparks, although certain critics blame a defective diesel road-switcher for the crime. There is a functioning covered bridge on the present-day B&M Hillsboro Branch close to the center of Hillsboro, a two-span Double Town-Pratt lattice bridge similar to the others, except that it also carries a foot bridge for local convenience. North of the bridge is an impressive wooden trestle leading to the yard with its once-busy turntable. The Goffstown Branch (B&M) still uses a 117-foot bridge built for the New Hampshire Central in 1850. Highway covered bridges abound in this part of New Hampshire, many of them adjacent to C&C right of way.

In time the schedules from Concord to Claremont Junction were lopped from three to two hours duration as a modicum of better rail and equipment took effect. Also, as traffic shifted gradually from railroads to highways, some stations were abolished and there was less to do at those remaining, as at Northville, where the station agent, on retirement, was replaced by a crane for mail pick-up on the fly. Still, the westbound grade through Newbury Cut lengthened passenger schedules by five minutes, and for freights which sometimes had to "double the hill" or get pusher



**Double-headed railfan train in last days of B&M operation.** *Donald R. Robinson*

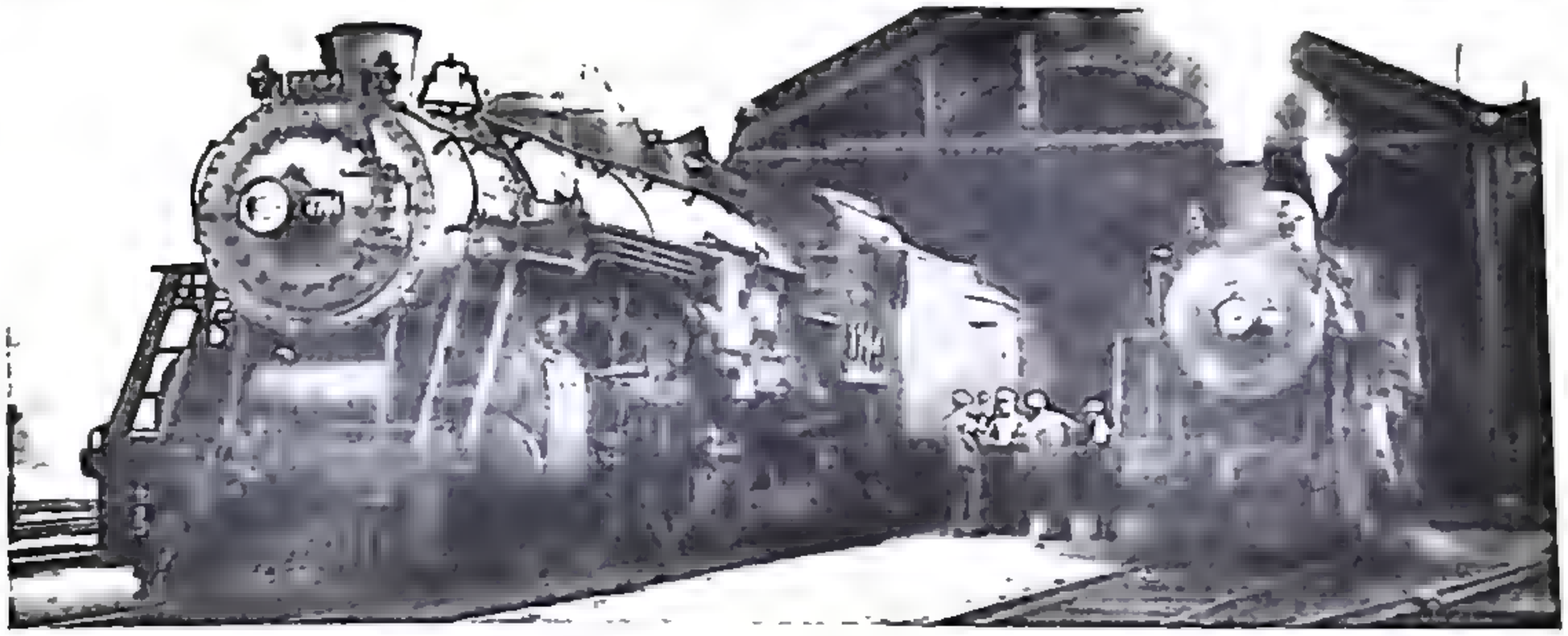
*Above:* **Picking up mail on the fly at Northville, N. H.** *At right:* **Mogul No. 1475, working local freight, "doubles" Newport Hill with about all she can carry, October, 1951.** *Philip R. Hastings photos*

help (using turntables at Bradford and Edgemont), there was no such thing as a "red-ball" timecard.

Down at the Concord end, the pleasant commotion of "train time" was activated four to five times daily, keyed to arrivals from Boston. Even the opulent Northern and the plush BC&M trains stepped to the Boston measure. The C&C perforce followed the routine dutifully for over a century: in 1850, a 10:30 A.M. departure following arrival of the 7:30 A.M. from Boston; in 1950, a 10:15 meshing with a 7:42 from Boston——a difference of fifteen minutes in a hundred years!

The cavern-like trainshed at Concord, the state's largest, sheltered six tracks, each with a name: P&H, East and West Subway, White Mountain, Mainline, Concord & Montreal, Concord & Claremont. Sometimes two trains would be backed in on one track, engines pointed in opposite directions, ready to whistle off northward or southbound. Arrival of the "big" train from Boston would touch off a flurry of people, baggage, express and mail transfer action followed by an "explosion" of trains outward from under the shed, for all the world like a roman candle ignited at both ends.

Typically, around the turn of century, the 6:40 A.M. train from Boston would come panting into the dark shed at 9:20 A.M. with cars for White River Junction. After relinquishing certain mail cars, it would depart at



*Top:* **From under these vaulting covers of the Concord station arrived and departed thousands of C&C trains.** *Perry Collection. Above:* **A P-3 Pacific and a B-15 Mogul listen in on engine men's gossip in the shadow of the trainshed.** *Philip R. Hastings*

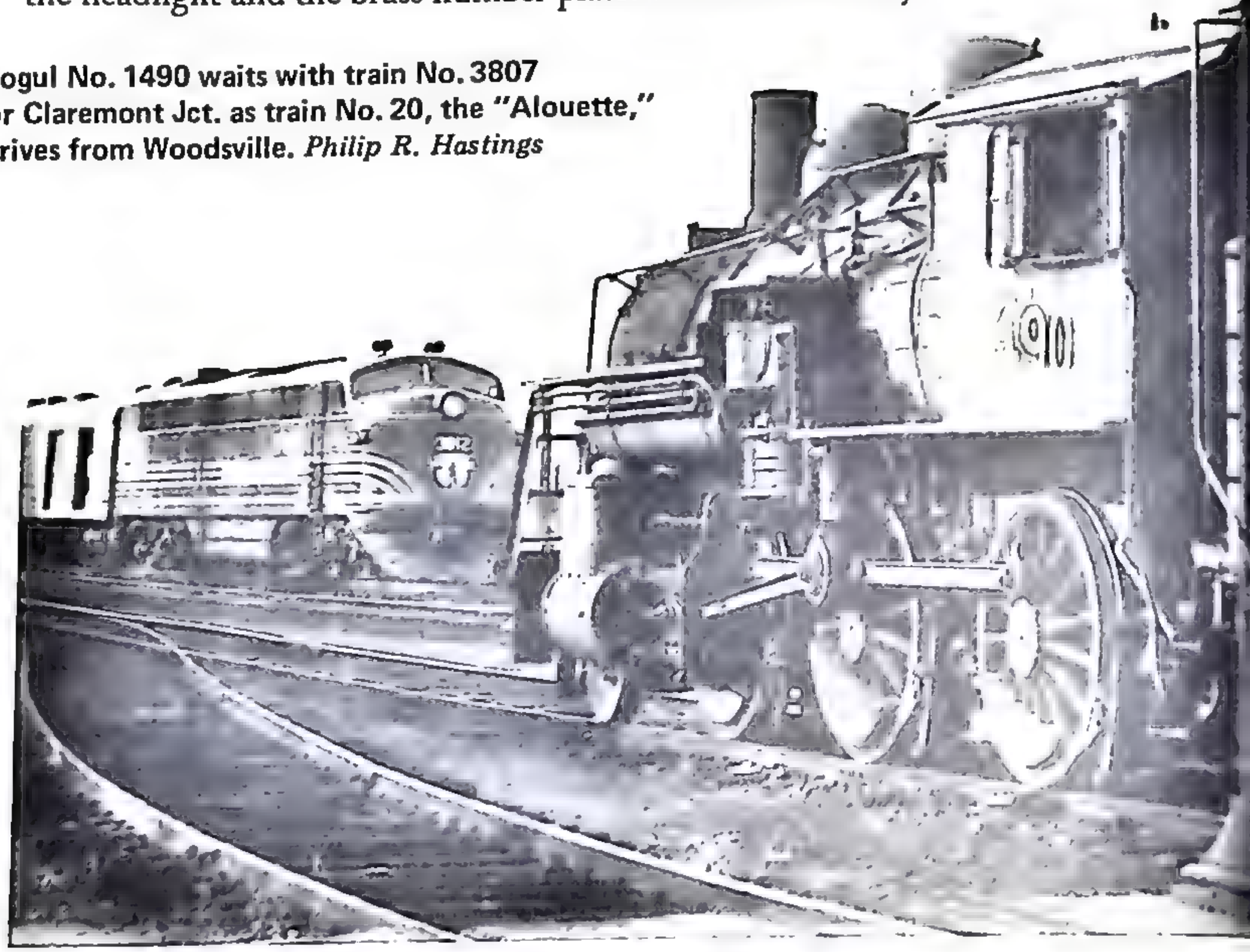
9:25 A.M. with a new engine. At 9:30 P.M. a small engine with a tinny bell would stamp out of the shed with a train over the P&H to Hillsboro. At 10:07, after the engine's blower had impatiently torn at the smokestack waiting for all that baggage and mail to be transshipped, a Concord & Claremont train would huff off toward "Tookie" (hoping that the P&H train had not come to grief en route).

This action was being repeated after World War II, although the P&H train has vanished with the floods of the 30's and diesels are elbowing aside the graceful Pacifics. The Claremont Branch is still in steam, however; if you have your ticket, you may want to look over the engine before the ball signal at the diamond moves aloft and gives clearance out of the yard. It is No. 1490, a B-15 class Mogul, its double air pump drumming up pressure.

There were 140 of these machines built by Manchester between 1895 and 1910, designed for freight service all over the then newly organized B&M system. They carried a 63-inch driver which permitted fair speed over good track and, at the same time, good "pull" for the grades. They yanked steel commuter trains when asked, and were assisting 80-car oil trains over the Fitchburg division during the war. Cylinders measuring 19 x 26 inches allowed a tractive effort of some 25,000 pounds. During the late 20s, most of the class was extensively modernized with steel cabs,

heavier brake systems, piston valves, air firedoors, and new tenders. Under Chief Engineer Barrett they achieved a squat look with running board steps thrust into the steam chest—like a small boy with his hands jammed in his pockets. A big Pyle-National headlight centered on the smokebox added a Cyclops effect. Huge domes perch on the boiler like humps on a dromedary. Initials "NH" on the cab signify that this is a New Hampshire native, not a foreign "F" for Fitchburg or "TP" for Terminal-Portland Division.

Spick-and-span has long since passed out of B&M vocabulary; now only the headlight and the brass number plates and bell are shiny.



**Mogul No. 1490 waits with train No. 3807 for Claremont Jct. as train No. 20, the "Alouette," arrives from Woodsville.** *Philip R. Hastings*

Inside the cab the injector lies athwart the boiler backhead, looking like some great cannon that be can unholstered quickly for dealing with an enemy. The engine crew's backrests are shaped like mandolins; the various steam and air valves are banked like stops on an organ console. There is a nosehigh throttle and a kneehigh reverse lever; any normal-size person can sight his eye along the boiler handrails while squinting ahead for signals, switches, crossings, opposing trains, and stray cattle.

The baggage car coupled to the tender has also a 15-foot railway post office compartment separate from the rest of the car, in which mail just tossed in from the city train will be sorted en route for the towns and hamlets. The coach following may be a vintage Laconia Car Company product, although in cold weather the Branch uses vestibuled cars rebuilt from wooden open-enders in Concord's own railroad car shop.

Suddenly, the ball signal is up. When the clerk slams shut the big mail

**A few minutes out of Concord, train No. 3807 with Mogul No. 1490 drifts across the highway.** *Philip R. Hastings.* **Mount Kearsarge glimpsed from a window of the Claremont Branch train.** *Mead Collection*

car door, signifying that everything is on board, Conductor Wes Davis beeps an air whistle go-ahead to Engineer Stewart up front in the No. 1490. The bell clangs obediently, and two-car train No. 3803 chuffs confidently away from the echoing station shed.

Under Bridge St. viaduct and through a curve to the left which leads up out of the Merrimack Valley, the Mogul plods along—past Horse Shoe Pond and the turnout for the spur to the State Prison. Booming over brooks that splash down from Rattlesnake Hill and Penacook Lake, it noses into West Concord, whistling loudly for the state highway. The train grinds over Bog Road and at least twice within Concord city limits crosses the Contoocook River over steel truss bridges. Mast Yard is eight miles from Concord and about 80 feet higher in altitude. Here great virgin pine masts were once cut for the British Navy.

**Taking a turn on the way freight, Mogul No. 1490 passes an old covered bridge on a country road near Warner.** *Philip R. Hastings*

**Mogul No. 1490 on the tri-weekly freight in from Concord pauses for orders at the Bradford station.** *Philip R. Hastings*

Contoocook is the first stop for our train, although in years previous it would have been the fourth. The engine halts just shy of a covered bridge as mail, express, and passengers are exchanged. Now 22 minutes out of Concord, the engine starts slowly and deliberately, and, like Apollyon in Hawthorne's story, the engineer exercises "his ingenuity in screwing the most abominable sounds from the whistle." Immediately in front of the covered bridge is a busy highway crossing. The sight and sound of this screaming monster emerging from this troglodyte's cave can scare the wits out of man or beast.

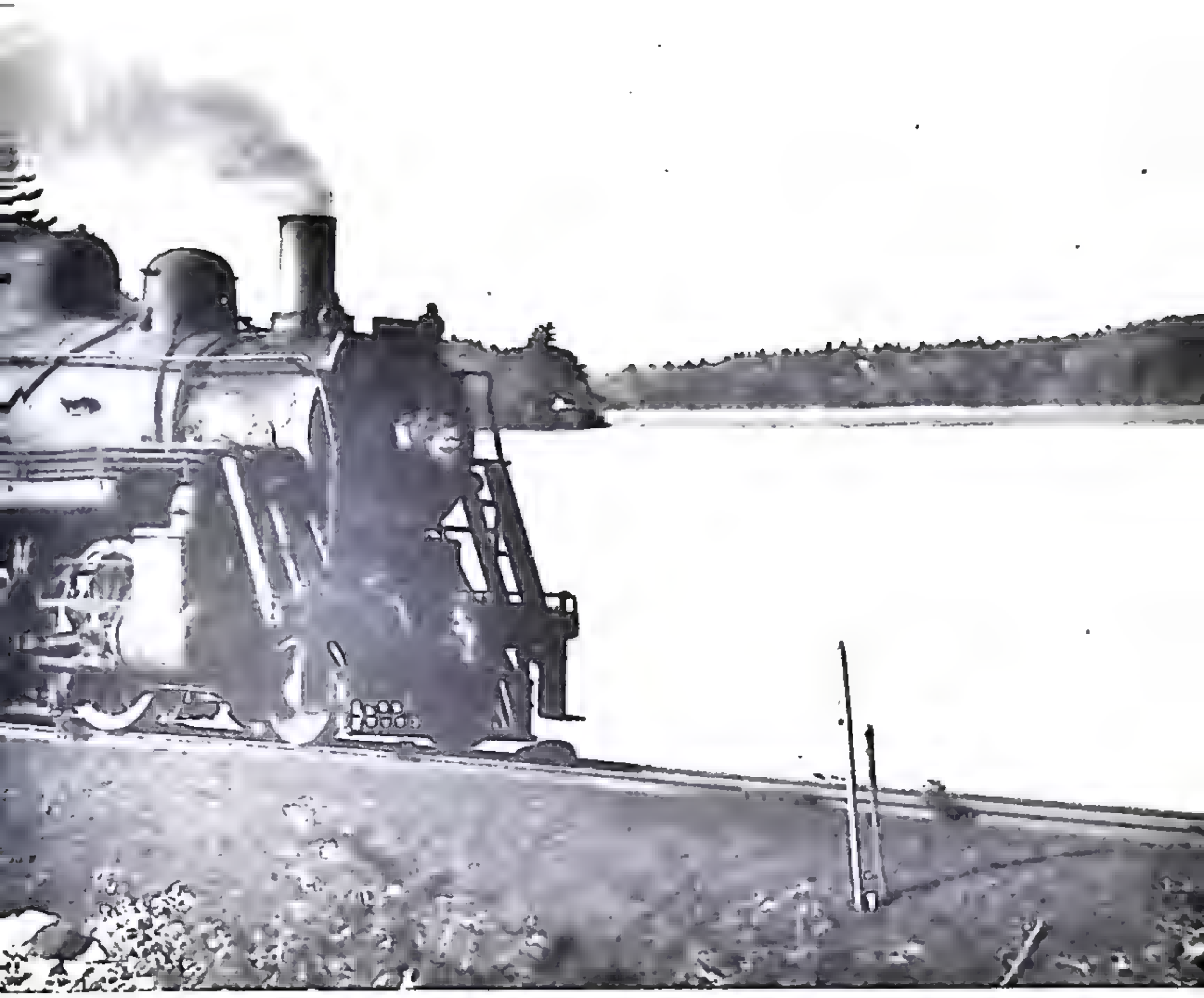
The Mogul and its two-car consist now take the right switch of the wye, leaving the Contoocook River for level running through a mixed stubble of birch and pine to track along the Warner River——and across it six times on bridges within the town limits of Warner alone. Just 19 miles from Concord and 157 feet higher in elevation, the train stops at

**Cold weather makes Mogul No. 1490 and friends smoke and steam all the more, here at Claremont.** *Mead Collection*

**Visiting 2–6–0 No. 1441 from Terminal-Portland Division wheels "Sunday only" train No. 3858 along Sunapee shore toward Newbury on a smiling September afternoon in 1951.** *Philip R. Hastings*

Warner station, one of several flag and regular stations within the township. The three-story station serves as a period backdrop as Christmas mail and packages are offloaded. Plumes of smoke rise from village houses; there is a chill in the air biting at finger and toe. The river is partly covered with ice, and there are open stretches revealing a dark mountain torrent rushing down off Kearsarge, that hunkering, paleozoic monster mountain. Never pausing for long, the train moves off again, past barnlike old factories, and hamlets whose economic usefulness has long since been forgotten. Near Melvin Mills the passenger lolling against the car window frame may be almost lulled to sleep by the cadence of the rattling pane, the creaking wood of the car, and the snowdamped rail-clicks. As the train swings over a bridge, there for a brief instant one can glimpse majestic Kearsarge under its mantle of snow and pine vestments.

In a few miles the kindly conductor announces Bradford, and the wheezing air brakes clasping hard bring the train to a stop with the



steamy Mogul positioned by a water spout. The train is now 684 feet above sea level and nearly 400 feet above Concord, 28 miles to the east. It's colder here, and the wind-whipped dry powder whirls into snow dervishes.

The engine briefly nurtured, bathed, and massaged with liberal coatings of oil, looks in the broad mountain valley like a very tiny fighter, getting ready to do combat with a Goliath. Perhaps it is thinking of ancestors years ago who fought the snow, hills, and curves on the very same pathway ahead. It moves off quietly but its breathing grows hard on a sudden 1.75 per cent hill just over Main St., followed by level track but hookered with a pair of eight-degree curves. This is a practice bout. Crossing Todd's Pond, the engine spars easily, but just ahead is a mile of 1.8 per cent. Sparks and cinders shoot out of the straight-barreled stack. Sawyer's Brook marks a level stretch where a second breath can be gained. The little engine remembers how it once pulled long strings of boxcars without slowing up in its younger days. Past milepost 29 and the level stretch. At milepost 30 the rail changes from 75-pound to 85-pound weight, and that

**Taking on water at the Junction after a successful tussle with the mountains—and December weather, 1951.** *Mead Collection*

means more grade. This time it's the maximum, almost like those 3- and 4-per-centers one hears about from out west.

A mile further the grade tapers off but a series of eight- and nine-degree reverse curves claw at the flanges, whipping and snapping the train, slowing progress upward. Just ahead is that incredible cut through the ledge which heaves up amid the morainal deposits. Here are 2,000- and 3,000-foot peaks on all sides. At Newbury station, 34 miles from Concord, the train stops for an exchange of mail with the local postmaster, a split-minute stop, for the engine is impatient now to be on its way up and over, with a nod to the lake now crusting with ice. At Edgemont, one hour and twenty minutes from Concord, it achieves the summit 1,126 feet above sea, having scaled an 838-foot barrier, surely a lesson to those arrivistes in Colorado and California.

The air valves heave a sigh of relief as the train crosses over a barren pass, with bogs surrounded by spruce and other trees of the higher altitudes. It is smooth sailing down the 1.51 per cent over rickety 75 pound rail, definitely not helpful for uphill battle on eastward movements. Near Guild, the track first makes contact with the Sugar River, and a series of crossings and recrossings begins. It will be crossed four times within sight of Newport's landmark Town Hall and Court building.

Clambering cautiously over a factory sidetrack, the train brakes carefully along the river. It hoots briefly for Cross St. and after Central St.

comes to a complete stop, air pumps heaving rapidly. The brakeman jumps off, walks ahead in snowboots to flag the train across Main St. The tracks lead between narrow buildings; the effect is like passing a canyon to reach the wide-soffited station on Depot St., 300 feet down from the summit, and 43 miles from the starting point. At Newport, the focus is on Claremont, and several passengers climb on board for the last few miles. Never stopping longer than it takes to unload and load, Davis signals a start, and the train moves off quickly across open fields, partly blown clear of the recent snowfall. To the north, Croydon Mountain, and on one side or the other is the boiling Sugar River. The track follows the river north until it joins a tributary. At milepost 46 the train curves south to cross a long iron bridge, whistling for the twin grade crossings at Northville. The old station has been replaced by a tiny rain shelter with a tall B&M signal which can be seen at some distance by the engineer, and which passengers use to flag the local.

Steaming under the state highway at Kelleyville, the breeze from the train slightly stirs two old telltales from the days when brakemen actually braked, and did their duties on the tops of trains. Below milepost 49, on a continuous one per cent grade, lurk two covered bridges. They look too small for the engine, but No. 1490 finds room enough. Smoke and steam issue from the vents for minutes after the little train has scurried on. Emerging from this gorge one can first see Green Mountain which guards Claremont on the east. Slightly further, where the track meets lonely backroad near Puckershire, the 3,144-foot peak of Mount Ascutn bursts into view.

At Chestnut St., the yard limit sign marks the train's arrival at Claremont, and the train slows after its sinuous run down from the icy heights. Bell clanging in a stentorian fashion, the Mogul eases over Pleasant St. and halts by the expansive red brick station. For a minute only, the pump



| Miles | Northbound | 3001 Sun AM | 305 exSun AM | 307 Daily PM | 313 exSun PM | 3009 Sun PM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.0 | BOSTON (No. Sta.)—Mass. Lv | 2 10 | 7 32 | 12 30 | 4 30 | 6 00 |
| 25.6 | Lowell | 2 57 | 8 30 | 1 04 | 5 03 | 6 35 |
| 39.0 | Nashua (Un. Sta.)—N. H. | 3 35 | 8 53 | 1 24 | 5 23 | 6 55 |
| 55.7 | Manchester | 4 20 | 9 22 | 1 47 | 5 47 | 7 17 |
| 73.3 | Concord—Ar | 4 45 | 9 45 | 2 10 | 6 10 | 7 41 |
| | | Bus | 3803 | Bus | 3807 | 3819 |
| 73.3 | CONCORD—N. H. Lv | 9 00 | 10 15 | 3 20 | 6 20 | 7 45 |
| | Hopkinton (P.O.) | 9 20 | ... | 3 37 | ... | ... |
| 85.3 | Contoocook (Bus P.O.) | 9 30 | 10 40 | 3 47 | 6 45 | 8 07 |
| 92.1 | Warner (Bus Wheeler's) | 9 45 | 10 53 | 3 03 | 6 58 | 8 20 |
| 98.1 | Melvin | 9 53 | f11 04 | 3 14 | f7 09 | f8 31 |
| 100.7 | Bradford (Bus Green Gables) | 10 00 | 11 12 | 3 25 | 7 15 | 8 37 |
| 107.1 | Newbury (Lake Sunapee) | 10 15 | 11 26 | 3 40 | 7 31 | 8 52 |
| 109.7 | Mt. Sunapee (Edgemont) | 10 23 | f11 31 | 3 47 | f7 36 | f8 57 |
| 113.4 | Sunapee | 10 32 | 11 40 | 3 55 | 7 45 | f9 05 |
| 116.4 | Newport (Bus Cor. Phcy.) | Δ10 42 | 11 51 | Δ4 05 | 7 55 | 9 15 |
| 119.1 | Northville | ... | f11 56 | ... | ... | ... |
| 128.1 | Claremont (City Bus Term.) | Δ11 00 | 12 17 | Δ4 20 | 8 25 | 9 39 |
| 130.0 | CLAREMONT JCT.—Ar | ... | 12 22 | ... | 8 33 | 9 45 |
| | | AM | PM | PM | PM | PM |

| Miles | Southbound | 3802 exSun AM | Bus Sun AM | Bus exSun AM | 3838 Sun PM | 3806 exSun PM | Bus Sun PM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | CLAREMONT JCT.—N. H. Lv | 7 10 | ... | ... | 3 20 | 3 20 | ... |
| | Claremont (City Bus Term.) | 7 16 | Δ11 30 | Δ11 40 | 3 26 | 3 26 | Δ6 00 |
| | Northville | f7 32 | ... | ... | f3 44 | f3 42 | ... |
| | Newport (Bus Cor. Phcy.) | 7 43 | Δ11 30 | Δ12 00 | 3 50 | 3 53 | Δ6 20 |
| | Sunapee | 7 53 | 12 00 | 12 10 | 3 57 | 4 03 | 6 30 |
| | Mt. Sunapee (Edgemont) | f8 01 | 12 08 | 12 18 | f4 05 | f4 10 | 6 38 |
| | Newbury (Lake Sunapee) | 8 07 | 12 15 | 12 25 | 4 12 | 4 17 | 6 45 |
| | Bradford (Bus Green Gables) | 8 20 | 12 28 | 12 38 | 4 25 | 4 30 | 6 58 |
| | Melvin | f8 25 | 12 36 | 12 46 | 4 30 | f4 35 | 7 06 |
| | Warner (Bus Wheeler's) | 8 38 | 12 47 | 12 57 | 4 43 | 4 48 | 7 17 |
| | Contoocook (Bus P.O.) | 8 52 | 1 08 | 1 18 | 4 57 | 5 03 | 7 32 |
| | Hopkinton (P.O.) | ... | 1 16 | 1 26 | ... | ... | 7 40 |
| | CONCORD—Ar | 9 15 | 1 35 | 1 45 | 5 20 | 5 25 | 7 58 |
| | | 310 | 3366 | 320 | 4020 | 20 | 26 |
| | Concord—Lv | 9 40 | 1 40 | 2 20 | 5 25 | 5 40 | 8 20 |
| | Manchester—Ar | 10 01 | 2 01 | 2 41 | 5 48 | 6 06 | 8 41 |
| | Nashua (Un. Sta.) | 10 24 | 2 25 | 3 05 | 6 09 | 6 29 | 9 04 |
| | Lowell—Mass. | 10 45 | 2 44 | 3 28 | 6 28 | 6 50 | 9 25 |
| | BOSTON (No. Sta.)—Ar | 11 20 | 3 30 | 4 05 | 7 00 | 7 30 | 10 15 |
| | | AM | PM | PM | PM | PM | PM |

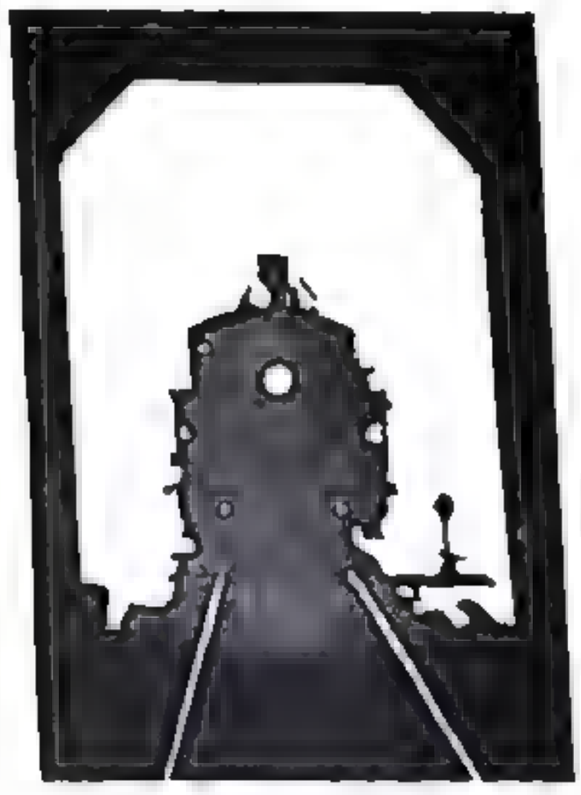
**Two weekday round trips by steam were supplemented by highway bus service — harbinger of things to come.** *Mead Collection*

**Operations at Claremont Jct. combine the hiss of steam and the throb of diesels as Branch trains await clearance following meets with Conn River Division north and south bound expresses.** *S.K.Bolton, Jr., photos from Rail Photo Service Collection*

throbs; then, with more ringing of the bell, the Mogul rolls off again. It slows over the trolley interchange, but is soon rocking and pitching around curves which lead to the Junction, two miles further, and 58 miles from Concord. At the foot of Barber Mountain, the Branch tracks careen right on a 13-degree curve into the station. The wayfreight Mogul is preening itself by the old square engine house nearby, and another engine is being worked over inside. With barely a moment for traincrew gossip about pensions, job bids, vacations, and other honest-to-goodness railroad talk,

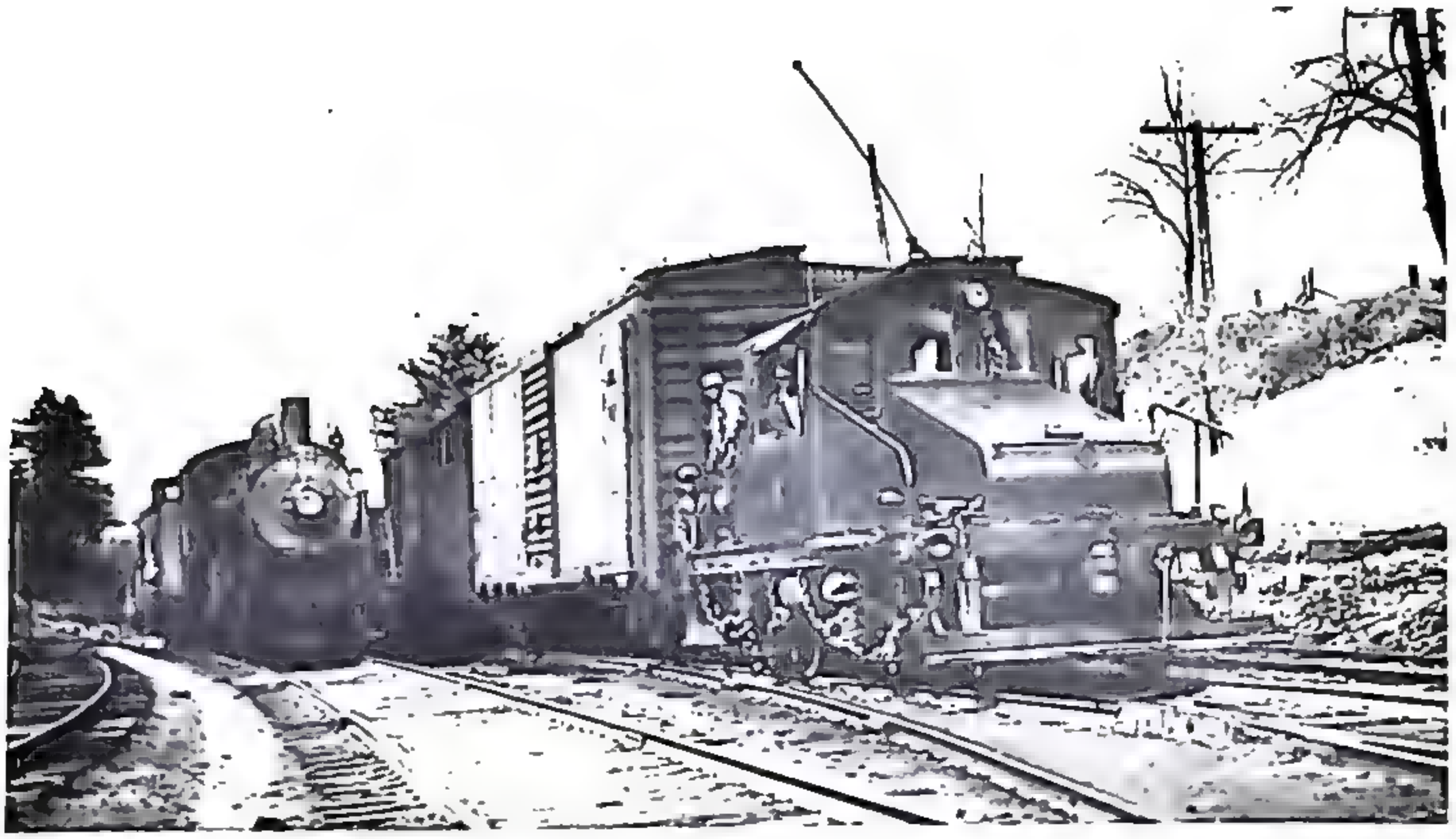
the train is emptied, and then it is turned on the wye. The 63-inch drivers dig into the rail, spin a few times, and bite in as they encounter dirt and gravel on the road crossing. The Connecticut River train is late as usual, and it will be a while before you hear No. 72's whistle echoing down the valley.

As they said at the start, the connection for New York was never much good.



Perhaps Claremont Branch was left much as it had been out of reverence for old things and rustic ways. More probably, the B&M was strained by its octopus role. In 1903, the New York, New Haven & Hartford RR under Charles S. Mellen snapped up the B&M, a logical move from the standpoint of train operations, but hardly propitious in a trust-busting era. By 1908, the ownership had been transferred to a dummy corporation, and in 1914 the B&M again became independent. Suffice it to say that modernization of branch lines held low priority during this period.

With the end of World War II, B&M, like other railroads, was fair near to exhaustion. Its track had been pounded by great termagant 2—10—2 engines running at speed to bring trains of oil, munitions, troops, and supplies to the eastern seaports. With the enabling philosophy of the Employment Act of 1946 and a keen prodding from the Motor Lobby, great highway developments became the new order——and the family formation explosion was reflected in urban sprawl and suburban expansion. The Claremont Branch, with its long-funneled engines and absurdly outmoded wooden coaches, emerged more as a joke than a practical mode of transport. Milk, passengers and, finally, the railway post office fled the rails, leaving armloads of express and a few sacks of bagged mail as the solitary occupants of the creaking baggage cars. By 1952, the managers at 150 Causeway Street in Boston were claiming an annual loss of $100,000 on the branch and clamoring for abandonment of everything between West



Concord and the west end of the line. The clamor was heard on another floor of the same building, because Samuel M. Pinsly, hero of the Hoosac Tunnel & Wilmington and a half-dozen other shortlines, was moved to investigate the possibilities of C&C as an independent shortline.

His philosophy was simple and plausible. Freight customers must have service, and this is easier done by a small local company with bustling salesmen than by a Headquarters where only Top Decisions are made. It even made sense to the railway unions, who weighed the alternatives of no freight traffic at all versus a cost-conscious shortline with flexible labor policies. To the B&M, it was retrenchment with honor.

Pinsly first learned about the Sugar River area through his purchase of the ailing trolley-wire Claremont Ry. which depended on aging water turbines for electric power and factories still supine after the Great Depression and World War II. His first move was to scrap the overhead wire and equipment, most of it 50 years old. He opted for 44-ton diesel switchers. The first of this class had come to New England from General Electric to replace wheezing 0—6—0s at remote outposts of B&M.

On July 12, 1954, Pinsly chartered the Claremont and Concord Railway Co. as a Delaware corporation, and a year afterward as a New Hampshire corporation. The line extended from West Concord to Claremont Junction, with an appended eight-mile remnant of the old Peterboro, Hillsboro, Contoocook trackage. For motive power, Pinsly brought in GE 70-ton Nos. 10 and 11. He obtained trackage rights into Concord over the B&M.

Since late 1952, the B&M had replaced steam power on the Claremont Branch "passenger job" with a gas-electric coach and trailer based on Con-

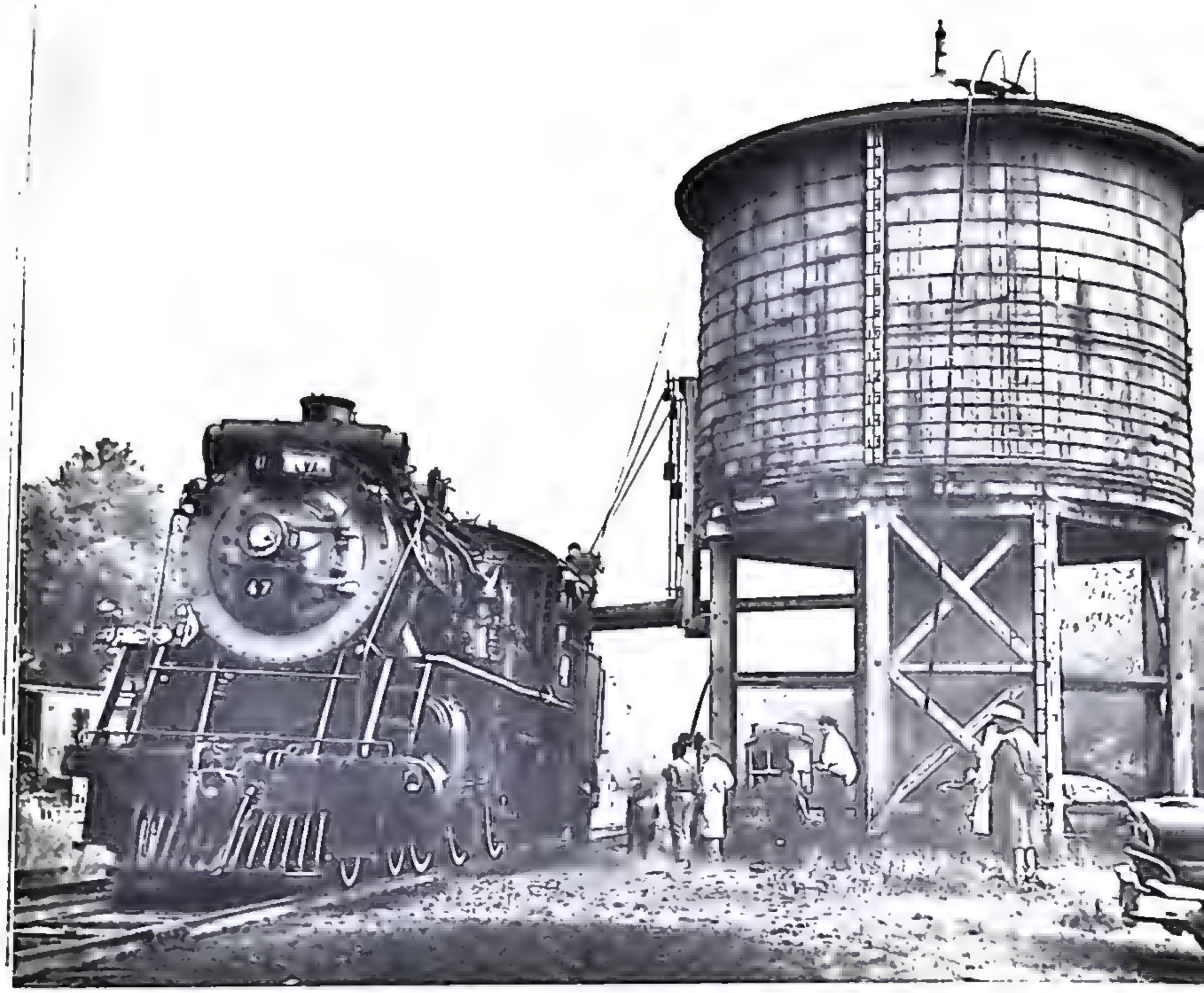
*Facing page:* **Aging Claremont Railway freight motor exchanges boxcars with the Branch local.** *Donald R. Robinson*

*At right:* **C&C (Pinsly) motor train No. 100 rumbles over a spindly wooden bridge during the last days of passenger service.** *Donald R. Robinson*

cord. Pinsly was willing to continue passenger trains as a service to the community, and did so for as long as the mail contract was continued. But this concluded in 1955, and with that the gas-electric of garish aluminum paint and fish-horn whistle departed the landscape, an unmourned mechanical nightmare. New Year's Eve marked the last C&C passenger run. Without a steam engine heading up some venerable old coaches it didn't seem to be an occasion for overwhelming sorrow.

As though the high gods of Kearsarge and Sunapee had never quite been propitiated, further encroachment lay in the offing. Mindful of the destructive floods of the '30s, and rich with appropriations, the Army Corps of Engineers moved into position, in 1959, for Operation Merrimack River Flood Control. Since the Contoocook River was a habitual offender, it would have to be vanquished properly and placed behind a permanent cement stockade. The forces of General Potter were provided with equipment which could have diverted the Mississippi at Vicksburg, and a new dam across the Contoocook stretched for miles. The C&C obtained some revenues from hauling cement and other supplies, and the Corps bought the land under the tracks but, by 1963, the rails had been removed and the great Hopkinton-Everett "Reservoir" was a historical fact. Only a rotting caboose and a lonely crossing sign stand guard where eight-wheelers and varnished coaches once proudly chuffed upstream.

This loss of track out to Henniker and Emerson placed a strain on the rest of the C&C system. Could one justify sending a diesel down from Claremont to shove a paltry few boxcars on weedy sidings in Warner and Bradford? Especially as the Merrimack Valley Farmers Cooperative was changing its grain and feed distribution out of its huge mixing plant at



**Ex-Canadian National suburban 4–6–4T fills up at Bradford water spout prior to another attack on Newbury Hill when 12 miles of C&C doubled as the short-lived Monadnock, Steamtown & Northern.** *John Krause*

Bow, south of Concord, where diesel trucks could now load for direct delivery to dairy farms within a 30-mile radius.

During the summer of 1961, C&C was jarred momentarily back to life. A steam loco and coaches full of revenue passengers were to operate again, and the placid waters of Lake Sunapee would resound to the echo of a chime whistle, all because a young railfan named F. Nelson Blount wanted to create an operating steam railroad museum. He and his friends had collected a few engines that they stored near Boston, but it was clear that a scenic location near a tourist rendezvous would be essential to success. After searching all over the eastern United States, Blount selected the C&C line into Lake Sunapee. A concession arrangement was worked out with the Claremont and Concord Railway for use of the 12-mile section between Bradford and Sunapee.

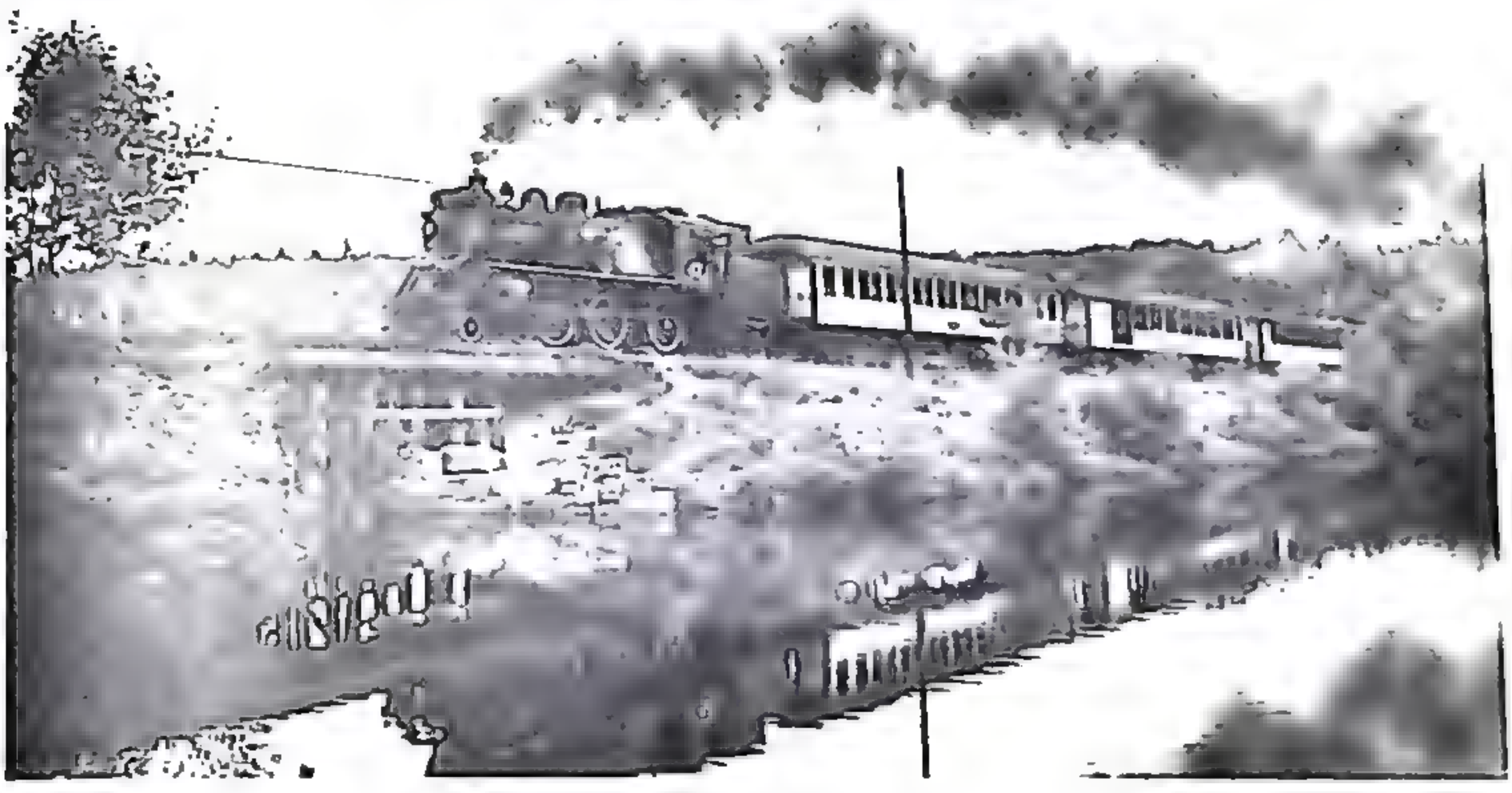
To restore oldtime flavor, Blount purchased several ancient B&M open-end coaches and painted them in B&M's ancestral yellow. For head-end

power he restored ex-Canadian National No. 47, a 4—6—4T Baltic once used in suburban service around Montreal. With cowcatchers at each end, the tank loco could run forward and backward with equal ease. Blount christened his line the Monadnock, Steamtown & Northern, choosing Bradford——with its water tank, station, sidings, and parking area——as operations GHQ. Many consider this to be the real genesis of Steamtown, USA, one of the largest and finest steam-era museums in the world, today located at Bellows Falls, Vermont.

Excursion railroads, particularly in steam and standard-gauge, were a national novelty——steam presumed to be forever dead everywhere, let alone New Hampshire. Yet here it was back again: a shiny, black locomotive wheeling vintage cars loaded with passengers that were numbered in the hundreds on weekends! High-stepping No. 47, though perhaps a trifle heavy for C&C rails, rolled along smoothly enough and its exhaust pealed off the hillsides as it tackled the 2 per cent grade of Newbury Hill.

The paleolithic disposition of those old mountains, Kearsarge, Sunapee, and Croydon, must still not have been assuaged by the doings of these mortals and their machinery. A visiting agent of the Interstate Commerce Commission saw plainly that the wheels were solid, the brakes muscular, and the boiler robust. But No. 47's dossier had been lost in a Montreal roundhouse fire, and there was nothing that anyone could do to rebut a final bureaucratic negative. Although sounder than many a diesel, engine

**Nelson Blount throttles Baltic No. 47 across Todd Pond en route for Newbury during the brief midsummer of excursions.** *Donald R. Robinson*



**Hand shoveling the 4-ft. drifts clogging Newport yard, while Claremont and Concord diesel No. 18 stands by to shove again.** *Mead Collection*

No. 47 was illegal! With remorse and embitterment, the operation was terminated; the little train sadly steamed off down Sugar River, across bridges Nos. 176 and 178, to a berth at Steamtown. It was the swan song of the C&C between West Concord and Newport. Scrap trains swept away the lightweight but still serviceable steel rail, and motorists nowadays whiz through Bradford past the old freight sheds and through the cuttings where Moguls once panted.

Back on Sullivan St. in Claremont, Pete Bump's voice crackles over a two-way radio to command a switching movement. General Manager Bump now superintends a network comprised of 17 miles of vintage C&C iron plus four miles of the old traction line. Yards bulge with boxcars. A bright red 44-ton diesel scurries to keep ahead of the chore of shifting 10 to 20 carloads a day over the Claremont and Concord (Pinsly). Shipments to Coy Paper Company call for a run two miles down a road where trucks and autos sometimes make a parking lot out of the right of way. The Monday-Wednesday-Friday trip to Newport has to be sandwiched between a meet with B&M's Conn River local and switching cars according to special orders from shippers' factory managers. Pulp and paper, petroleum, coal, lumber, grain and foodstuffs move in a ratio of about five cars in to one out.

As dowry from the B&M, the gas-electric——No. 100——an RPO trailer, a caboose, and a wedge plow originally came to the Pinsly C&C. Steamtown USA now has the plow and the caboose; the gas-electric is scrapped, the trailer used as a tool shed. But eight wood chip cars, two flat cars, and a flotilla of highway and other offline vehicles supplement two C&C-owned locomotives. These are 44-ton diesel switchers, No. 31—from Sanford & Eastern—another Pinsly preserve—and companion No. 18.

Operations notwithstanding, when winter snows howl down from old Kearsarge one or both engines must sally forth and, with an air-controlled nose plow poised up front like a gladiator's sword, do battle with drifts pitched three, four, and more feet deep in traditional C&C style.

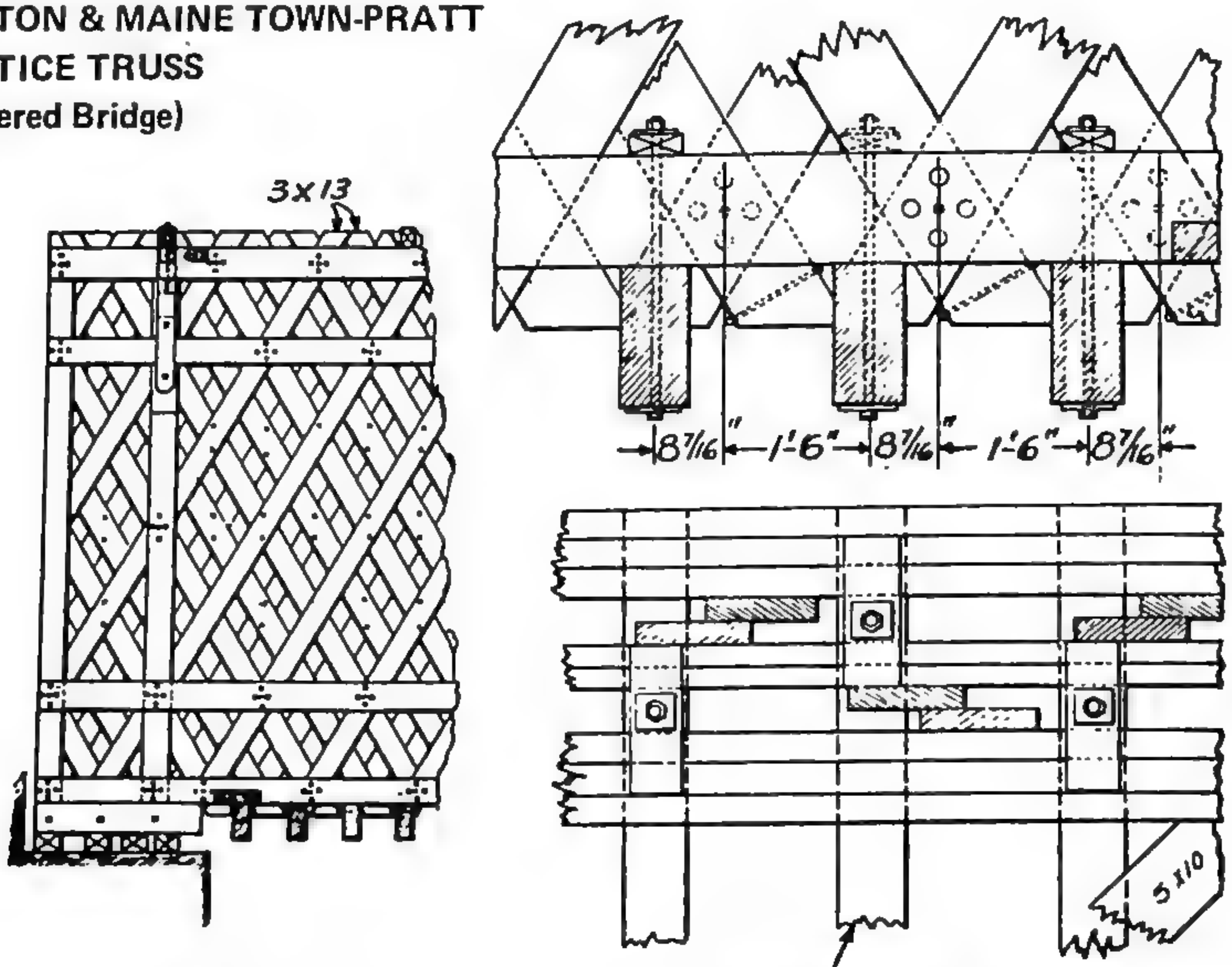
"Was they drifts down the loine?" queries an oldtimer. "Purty good 'uns," the crew will perhaps admit, after a snow trip taking all day.

THE END

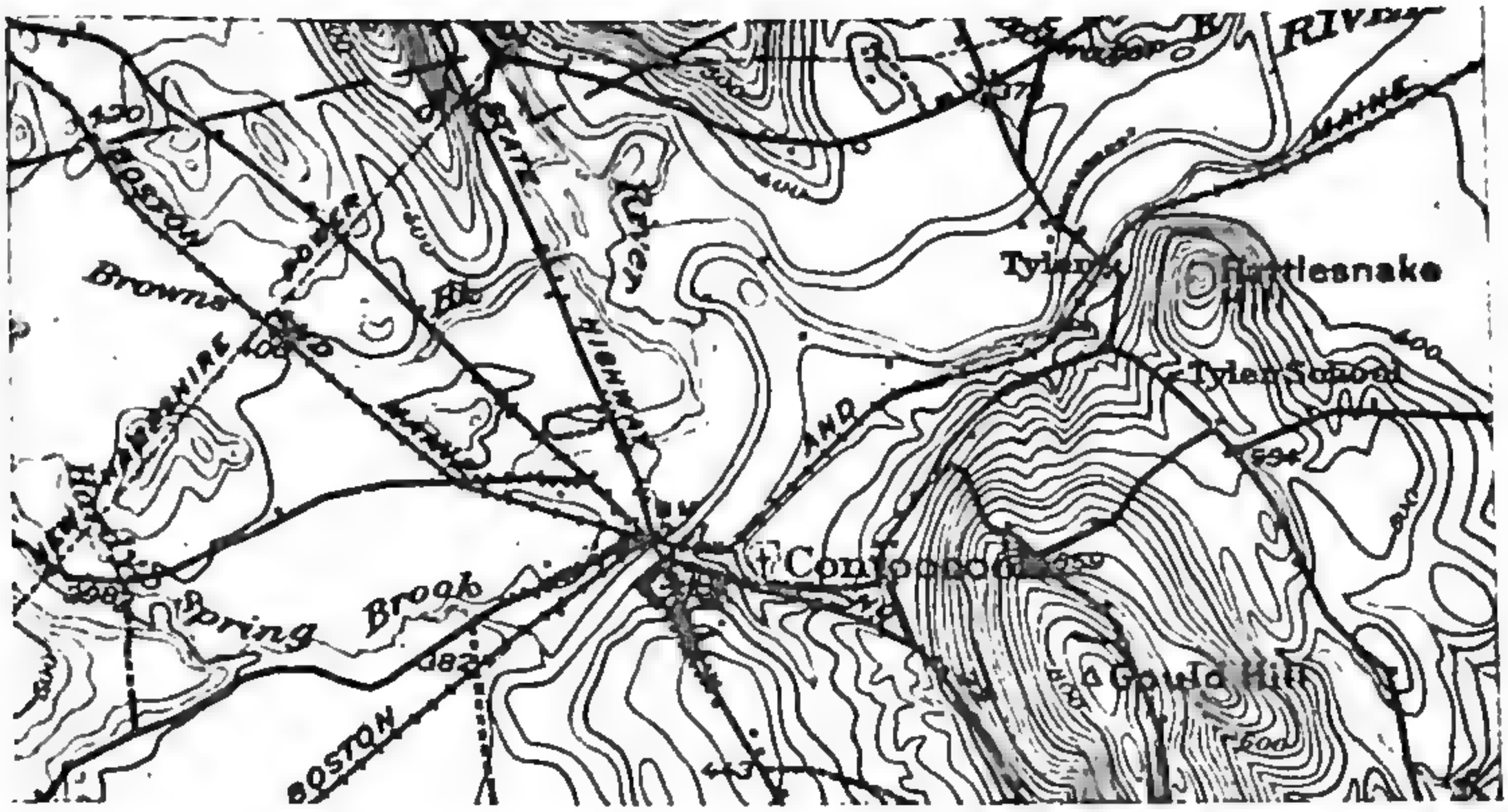
## THROUGH COVERED BRIDGES TO CONCORD —ESPECIALLY THE ONE AT CONTOOCOOK!

**Directly behind train braking to a stop at Contoocook station is the covered bridge described on pages 31-32. Switchpoints for turnout at farther end of bridge, where Claremont and Hillsboro routes diverge, are partly on the bridge itself.** *Donald R. Robinson photo*

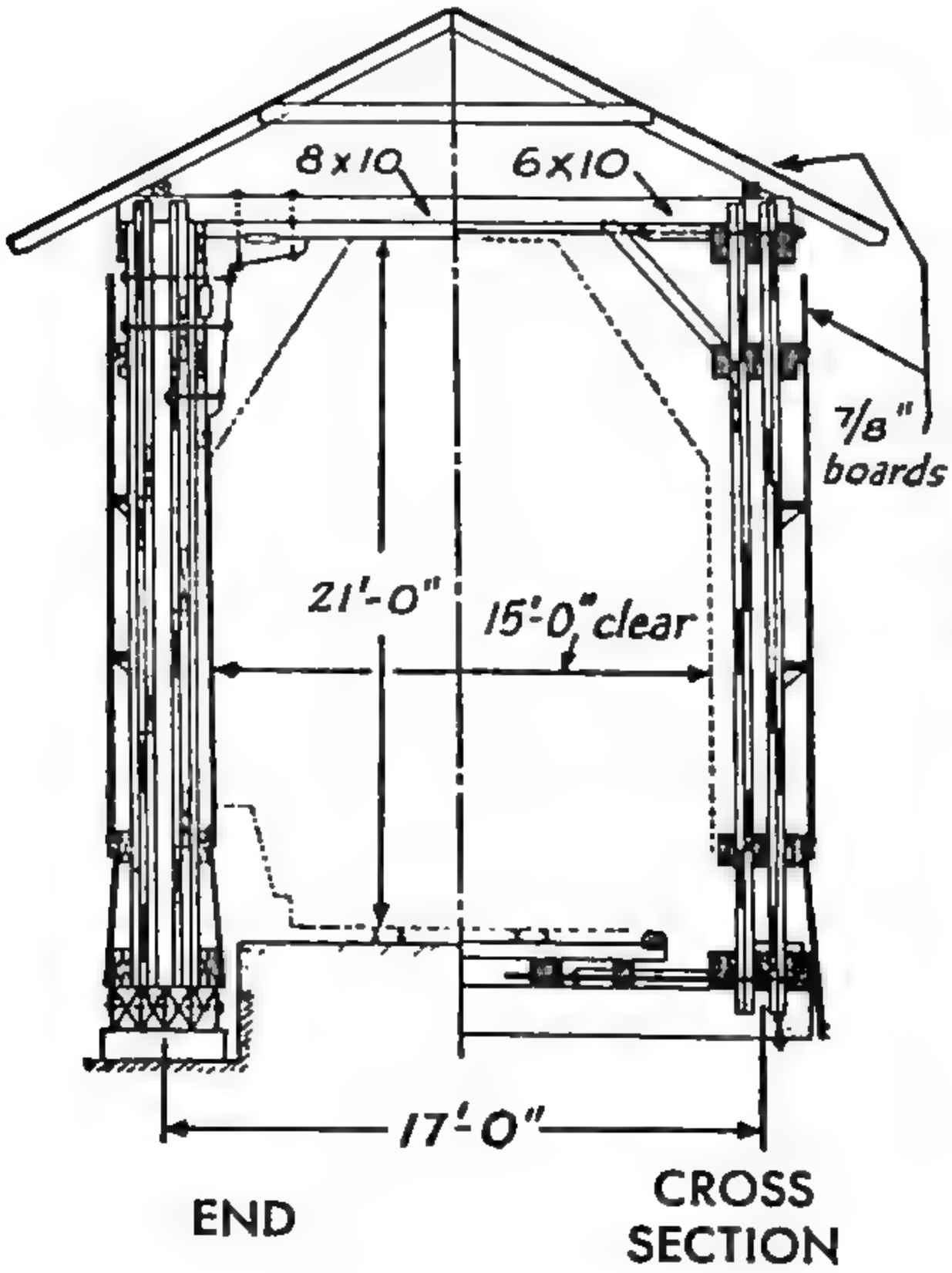
## BOSTON & MAINE TOWN-PRATT LATTICE TRUSS (Covered Bridge)




Courtesy of *Model Railroader.* Copyright 1954 by Kalmbach Publishing Co.

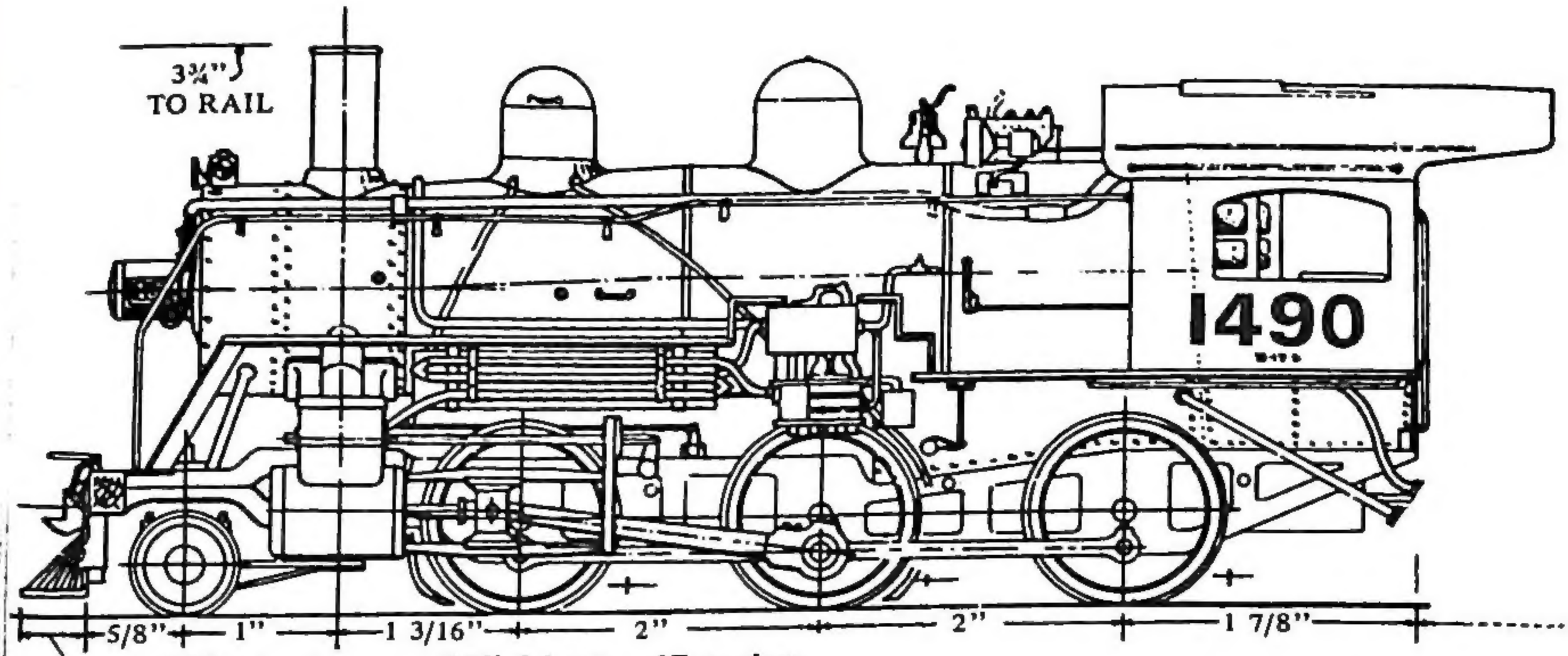



**Roads and rails radiate from the Contoocook river crossings** shown above in a U. S. Geodetic Survey map of the 1920s. White, meandering ribbon through map is the Contoocook River, into which Warner River empties at the beginning of the Contoocook's oxbow loop north of the railroad covered bridge. Trains using the RR line trending southwest wound up in Hillsboro, via West Hopkinton and Henniker, proclaimed "the only Henniker on Earth" by signboards welcoming the visitor. Two silent witnesses to the fortunes of C&C from Joseph Barnard to the Army Corps of Engineers are the eminences Gould Hill and Rattlesnake Hill, where contractor Barnard harvested the timber for USS *Kearsarge*. Nothing today remains of the trackage shown in the map. Below, a glimpse of the plant in Warner of a local industry that originated much traffic for C&C. Carloads of crutches!

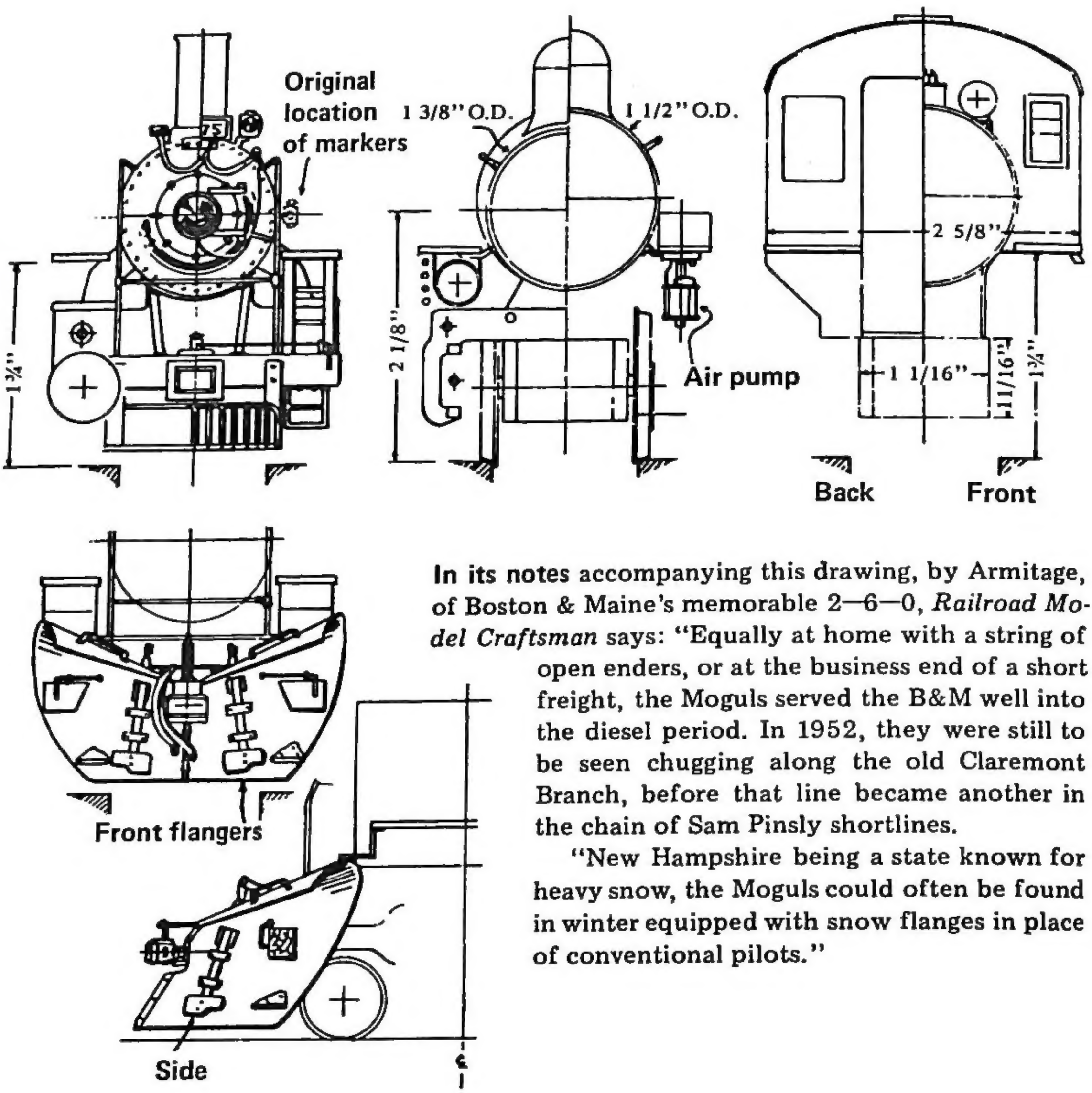


*Mead Collection*

# BOSTON & MAINE MOGUL Class B-15b+c Numbers 1360 - 1499



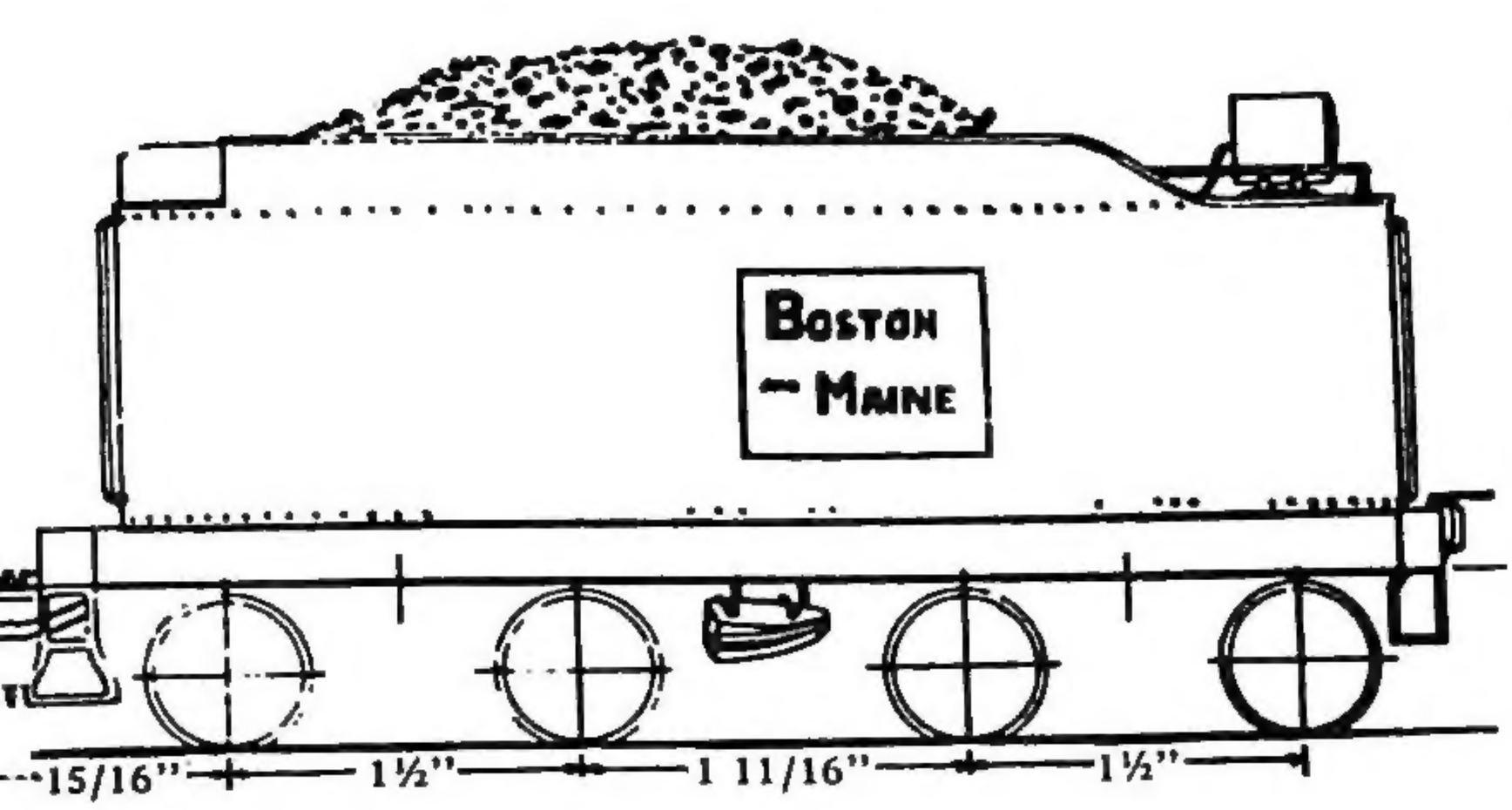

Courtesy of *Railroad Model Craftsman*

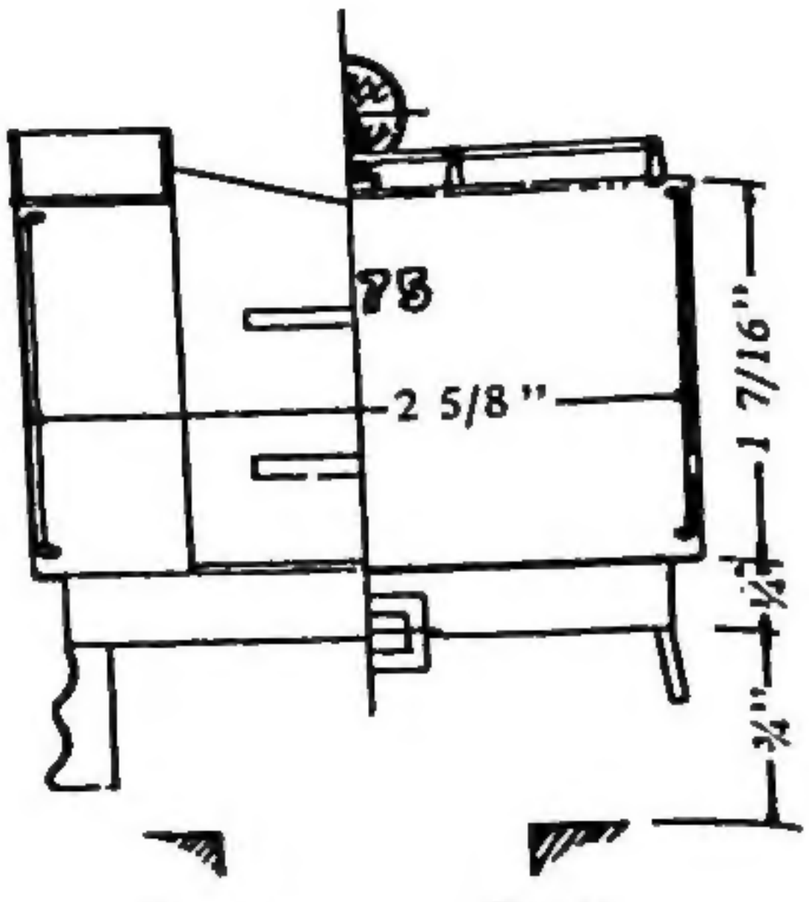



**In its notes** accompanying this drawing, by Armitage, of Boston & Maine's memorable 2—6—0, *Railroad Model Craftsman* says: "Equally at home with a string of open enders, or at the business end of a short freight, the Moguls served the B&M well into the diesel period. In 1952, they were still to be seen chugging along the old Claremont Branch, before that line became another in the chain of Sam Pinsly shortlines.

"New Hampshire being a state known for heavy snow, the Moguls could often be found in winter equipped with snow flanges in place of conventional pilots."

Full size HO scale: 3.5mm = 1'–0"; 1:87

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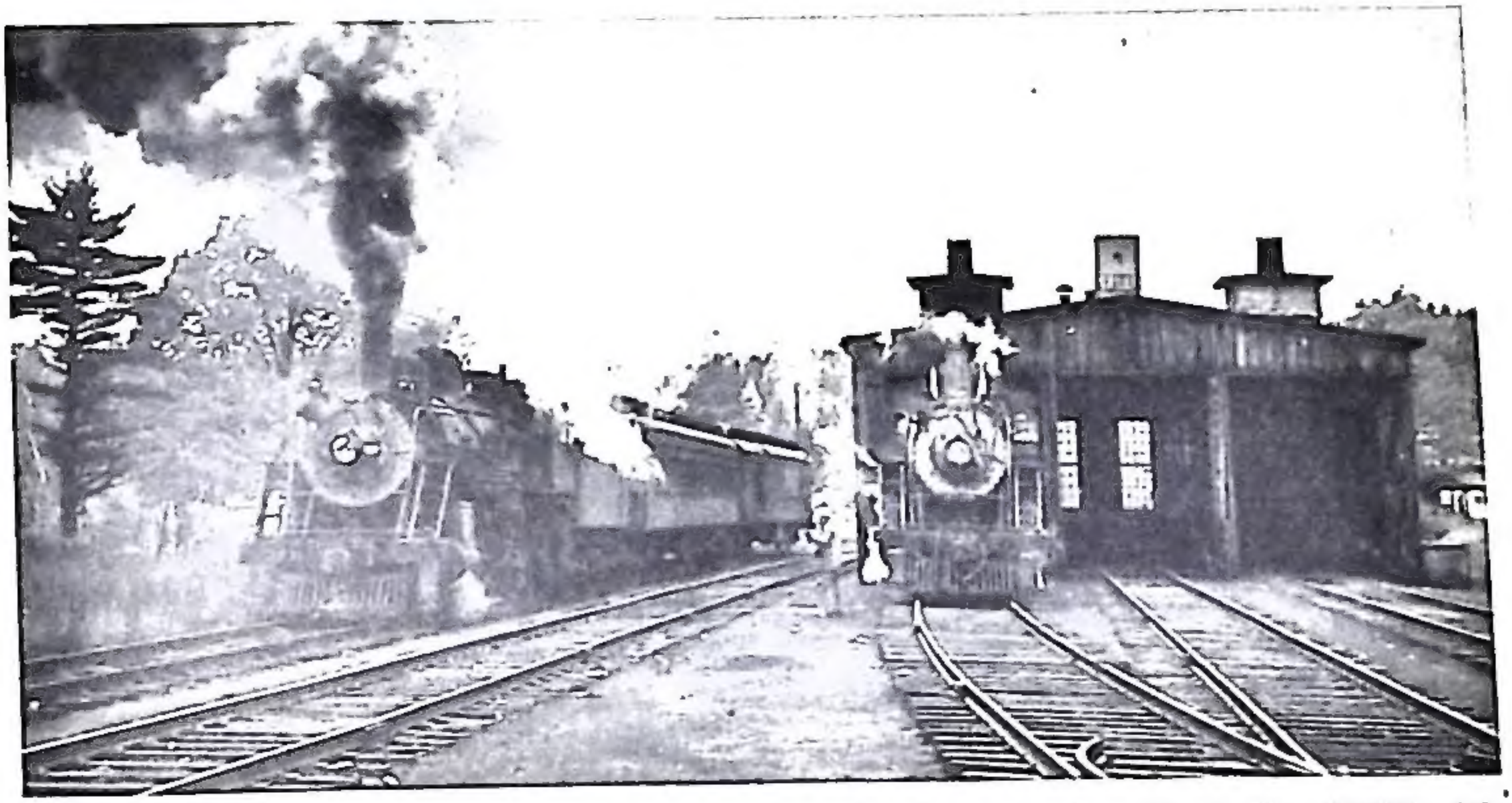
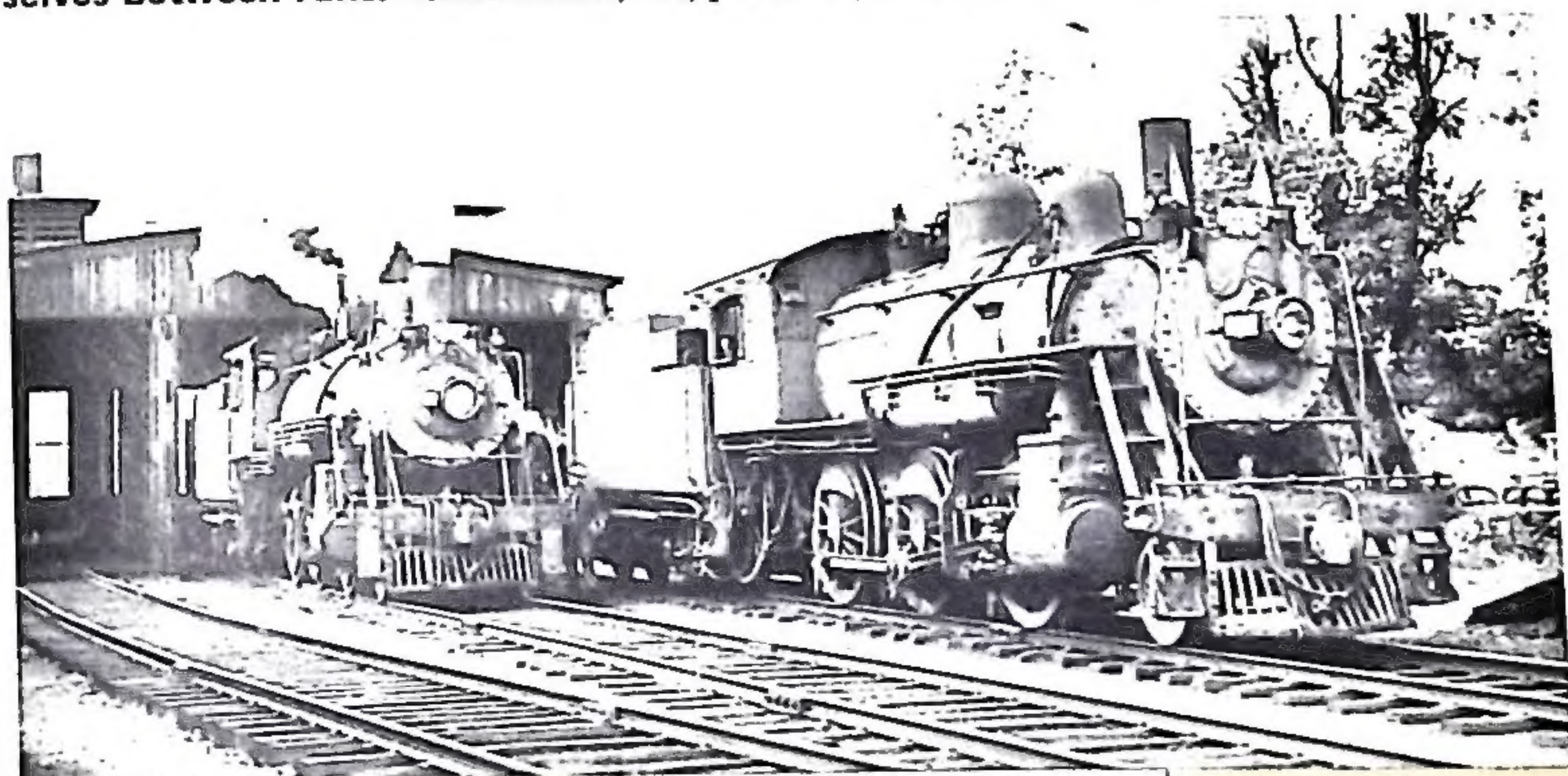
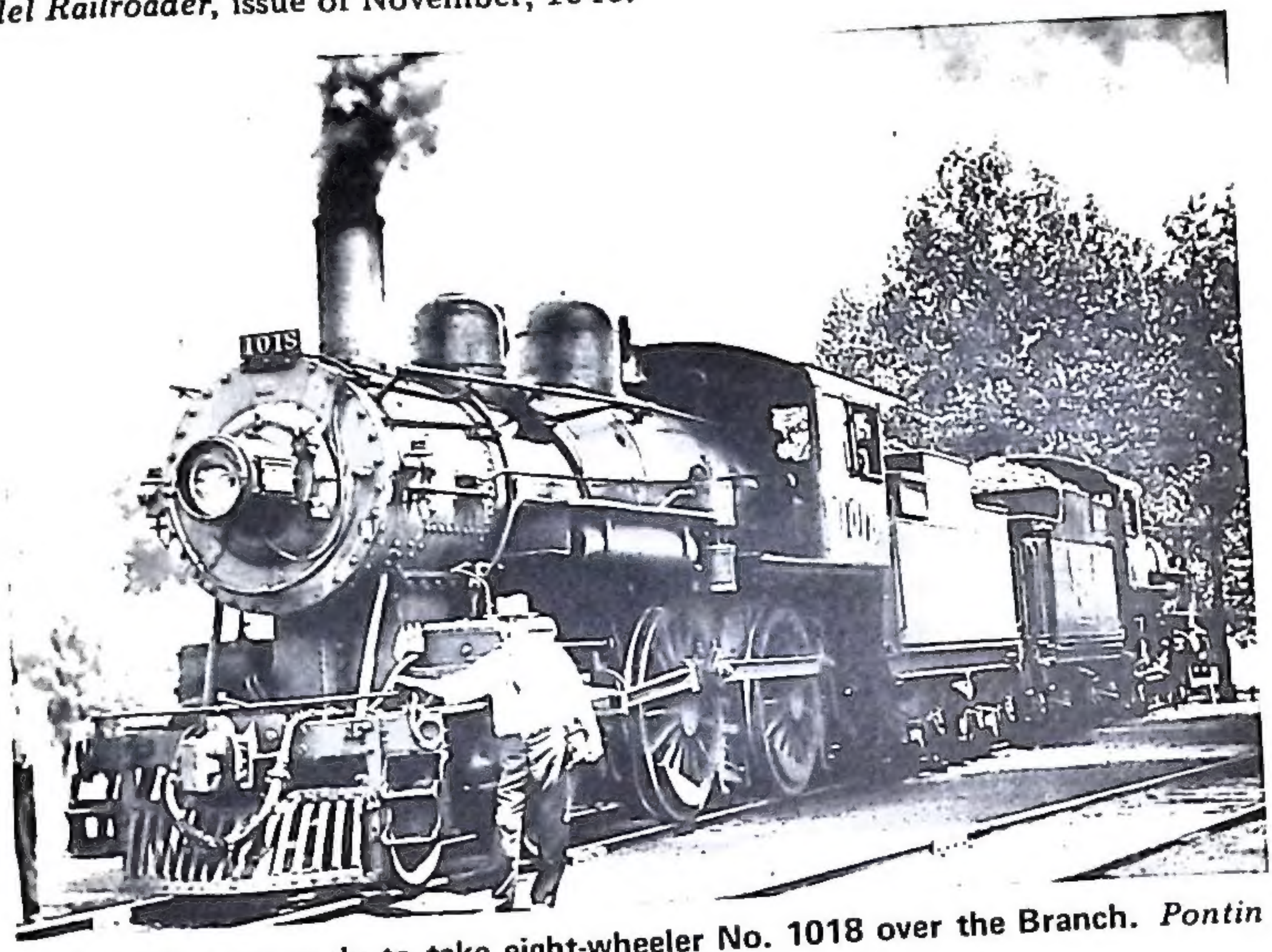


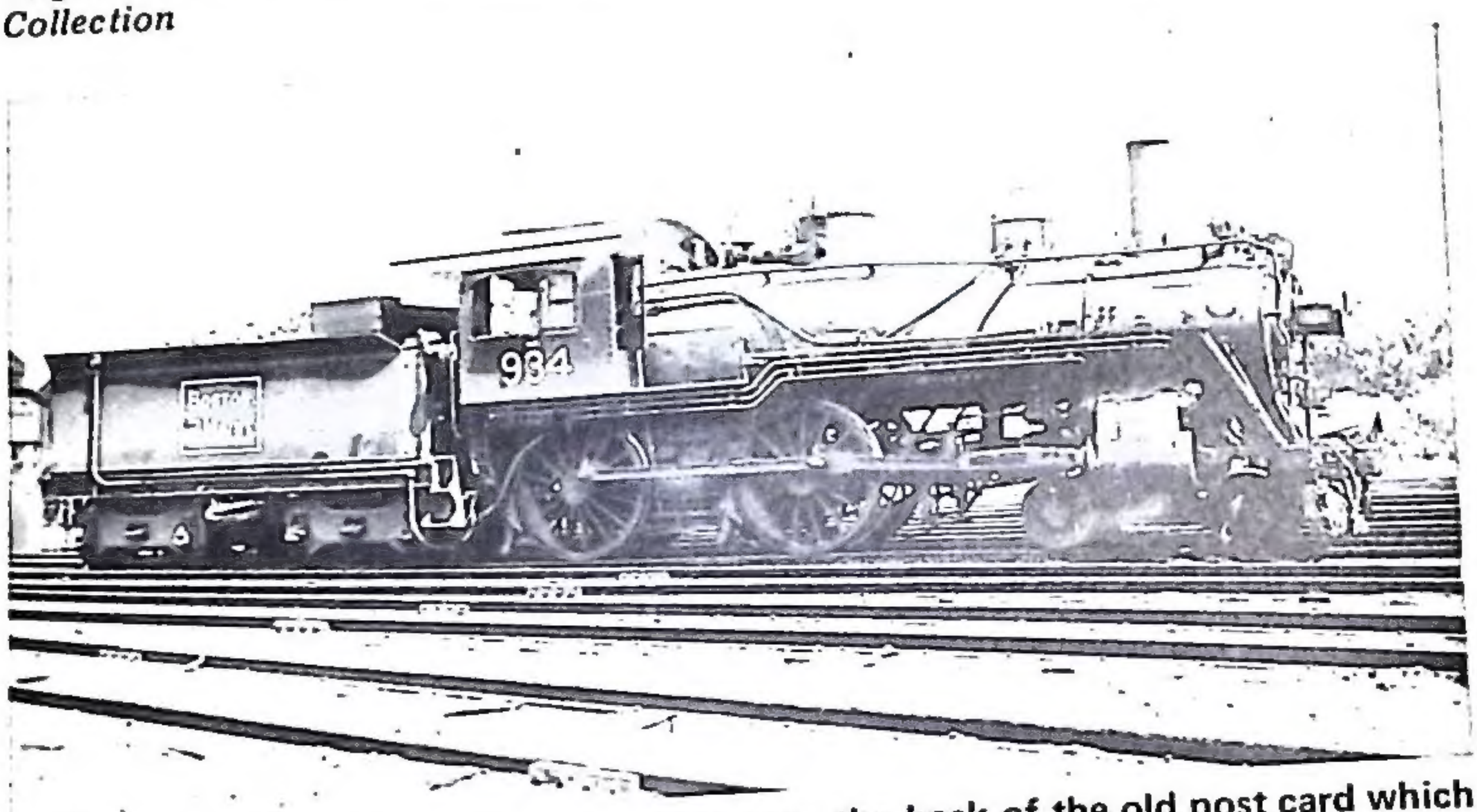
Moguls in action and repose at Claremont engine house. *Top:* Train No. 3802 with B-15 No. 1431 on point departs for Concord as No. 1475 prepares to work local freight. *Philip R. Hastings photo. Below:* Moguls Nos. 1483 and 1493 sun themselves between runs. *S.K. Bolton, Jr., picture from Rail Photo Service Collection*



**Typical 4—4—0s to operate on the Claremont Branch** prior to World War II (see page 31) were these B&M A-40 and A-41 classic eight-wheelers numbered in the 900s and 1000s. Drawings of the No. 1000 series were published in *Model Railroader*, issue of November, 1945.




**Engineer Stewart ready to take eight-wheeler No. 1018 over the Branch.** *Pontin Collection*




**"Used on C&C RR"** is pencilled notation on the back of the old post card which **features this portrait of A-40 No. 934.** *"Ferroviagraph by Phil. H. Bonnet" is the way the credit line reads.*